Engaging the Pedagogic Potential of WP Learner Autonomy in HE: A Case Study on the Design and Exploration of an Autonomous Learning Construct, and its Application to Practice.

Thesis

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Abstract

This is a mixed-methods, affirmative postmodernist, pragmatic case study on how tutors recognise and engage learner autonomy in their teaching practices. The study involves the design and exploration of the Autonomy in Learning Construct (ALC) and an explanation of how it assists with operationalising learner autonomy on an HE programme. The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy is proposed as the degree of autonomy the learner brings to the teaching and learning relationship. The purpose of the ALC is to assist the tutor in engaging this potential in their day-to-day teaching practices. This study adopted Instructional Design Theory (IDT) for construct design, and the Framework for an Integrated Methodology (FraIM) for case study research design. Methods included survey, tutor task and semi-structured interview. It was found that the newly developed ALC could support tutor practices in engaging the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. This study inducts four degrees which provide a meta language and means of evaluation for learner autonomy. The study concludes that the ALC is a feasible means of engaging learner autonomy in day-to-day teaching practices. It constrains tutors to provide an active learning environment, and its evaluation aspect provides a means by which tutors recognise and evaluate degrees of learner autonomy. This study contributes to knowledge of learner autonomy through four new concepts including: The Autonomy in Learning Construct, the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, heteronomous independence, and learner heteronomy. Four degrees of learner autonomy with their codes (A, AD H, HI) are a further contribution from this study, by which tutors evaluate learner autonomy. The study also contributes evidence to Benson's (2013) second hypotheses that learners who lack autonomy, can develop it given appropriate conditions and preparations. Finally, this study contributes to current studies on the learner autonomy of students on widening participation programmes.

Acknowledgements

"Wisdom is supreme- so get wisdom.

… whatever else you get, get understanding"

(Proverbs 4:7 CSB)

I acknowledge with gratitude, Yahweh, in every jot and tittle.

I express my heartfelt thanks firstly to my family, Shola, Solape, Ayo and lately David, who have endured with me in more ways than one from the inception to the completion of my doctoral journey. Secondly, to my colleagues who gave up precious time to participate in this research project despite their heavy workloads. Finally, I acknowledge the important contribution of my supervisors, David Plowright, Laura Hill and recently Pete Bradshaw, for their work and support to make this thesis a reality.

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List of Abbreviations

ALC	Autonomy in Learning Construct
AQF	Australian Quality Framework
BFUG	Bologna Follow up Group
CAT	Credits Accumulation and Transfer
CET	Cognitive Evaluation Theory
ECTS	European Credits Transfer System
EPLOC	Externally Perceived Locus of Causality
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
EU	European Union
EQF	European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning
FE	Further Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
GCSE	General Certificate of Education
GMS	General Modular Scheme
HE	Higher Education
IPLOC	Internal Perceived Locus of Causality
LCT	Legitimation Code Theory
LE	Learning Environments
LLL	Lifelong Learning
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QF-EHEA	Quality Framework European Higher Education Area
SDT	Self Determination Theory
SEEC	South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer
SO	Student Outcomes and Learning Gain
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency
TQ	Teaching Quality
UKES	United Kingdom Engagement Survey
UKPSF	United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework

CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

This study is the outcome of a sustained professional curiosity, over many years, about learner autonomy in HE. My interest stems from my own experience as an HE tutor and autonomous life-long learner, as well my responsibilities as an HE lecturer observing how some learners struggle with developing autonomy in learning and how tutors may support their development.

Learner autonomy enables students achieve formal learning outcomes in HE (Christie et al., 2011), and employ their HE experiences in contributing constructively to societal demands and challenges (Marsh and Smith, 2000). It is mediated by tutor and student practices, and success or failure lies in the relationship between the practices that students and their HE tutors engage during pedagogic sessions (Goode, 2007). It is fundamental to creating a democratic and inclusive culture to support the learning experience. For example, Freire (2000, p13) argues that 'The educator with a democratic vision or posture cannot avoid in his teaching praxis insisting on the critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner'. A democratic learning experience allows fairness for all learners in achieving their goals (Chemers et al., 2001).

This study contributes to knowledge on learner autonomy through the introduction of the Autonomy in Learning Construct (ALC) see (Fig 1.1).

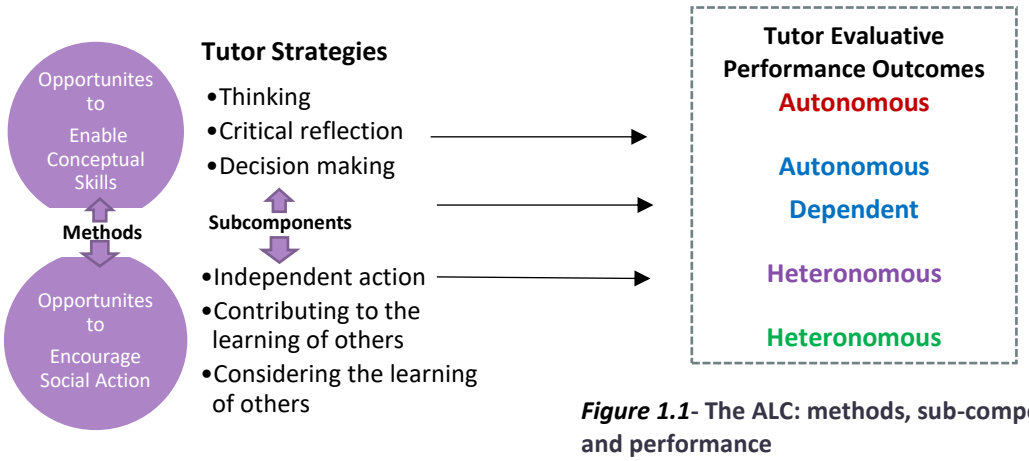

***Figure 1.1*- The ALC: methods, sub-components, and performance**

The ALC is a construct designed in this study, for equipping tutors to recognise and engage learner autonomy in their day-to-day teaching. Its purpose is to draw tutor attention to the importance of the pedagogic potential that learner autonomy brings to general teaching and learning practices. This study considers policy and literature, with theoretical and research design, as it investigates the feasibility of the ALC, as a construct for tutors to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

1.1 Research Questions

The study achieves its purpose through raising, and addressing, the following main research question:

> How feasible is the newly designed autonomy in learning construct (ALC) in supporting HE tutor practices to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

This question is supported by three sub-questions:

> **RQ 1**: How do tutors see learner autonomy?
>
> **RQ 2:** To what extent do tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in teaching and learning?
>
> **RQ 3:** What aspects of the ALC are likely to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

The study takes place with a group of tutors teaching on a Foundation Degree/BA top up programme for widening participation students. The tutors face several challenges in engaging learner autonomy. The challenges create a tension between two areas, tutors' understandings of their pedagogic role, and the necessity to achieve autonomous learner outcomes in HE (Marsh and Smith, 2000). An affirmative postmodernist approach provides a means of exploring both areas without privileging one over the other (O'Leary, 2018). This study engages methods necessary to achieve research aims and explores data and findings for evidence of privileging. Engaging practical methods

and challenging privileging, makes this an affirmative postmodernist and pragmatic study, with direct contributions to tutor practices in relation to learner autonomy.

The ALC is made of up two distinct aspects (see fig1.1 above):

1) practical tutor strategies which create appropriate conditions

and

2) tutor evaluative performance outcomes which indicate degrees of learner autonomy.

The first aspect comprises tutor strategies, which are teaching approaches aimed at creating conditions that engage learner autonomy. The second aspect consists of degrees of learner autonomy, used by tutors, to evaluate the level to which the learner is performing autonomously at a point in time. This study contributes to new knowledge of professional practice aimed at supporting autonomous learning for widening participation (WP) learners at HE level. This is important for two reasons. Firstly, there is a potential within a learner's autonomy to facilitate pedagogy, and thereby enhance student engagement during teaching and learning sessions. This potential is referred to by a term devised in this study - the 'pedagogic potential of learner autonomy'. Secondly, autonomy is a key indicator of graduateness, necessary for employability following the completion of HE studies. To engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, is to recognise and use the learner's autonomy as a part of the teaching and learning process.

The importance of learner autonomy highlights three considerations in relation to the professional context for this study. Firstly, a need for current studies on types of learner autonomy of students on widening participation programmes. Secondly, that tutors need to engage learner autonomy to ensure quality teaching and learning, as well as qualification outcomes on HE programmes. Thirdly, that the role of learner autonomy in HE needs to be made clear and explicit. This is particularly the case on widening participation programmes (Herrera et al., 2015) as students on these programmes are less likely to be academically autonomous. Marr et al. (2013) in their tenth-year review of a strategy to equip WP learners with higher study skills (Openings), argue that the

state of learner autonomy is one of three core attributes and should be the main focus for introductory programmes seeking to widen access to learners at higher education level. Furthermore, Leathwood and O'Connell (2003), note that in addition to having a significant proportion of work-based learning, widening participation students tend to need more support than traditional students in completing their academic studies.

1.2 The Pedagogic Potential of Recognising Learner Autonomy

Pedagogy explains how we teach and engage learners within a teaching and learning relationship. It is 'any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another' (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999, p. 3). Benson's (2013, p. 203) hypotheses clarifies the importance of recognising the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy:

1) The concept of autonomy is grounded in a natural tendency for learners to take control over their own learning.

2) Learners who lack autonomy, can develop it given appropriate conditions and preparations.

3) Autonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning.

Reflection on the ideas of Watkins and Mortimore, (1999) and Benson, (2013), leads to a conclusion that learners have a natural tendency to engage learning activities, and to enhance their learning through autonomous actions. Thus, the concept involved in this study is learner autonomy which has pedagogic potential effective for learning, given the right 'conditions and preparations' i.e., tutor practices.

For this reason, this study takes the position that learner autonomy is an implicit, dynamic, pedagogical tool which may be externally engaged or constrained by tutor practices. The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, involves the extent to which learners take the initiative, are proactive and are independent in acquiring new

knowledge and skills. This includes the degree of their natural or acquired tendency to engage autonomous actions as learners. Recognising the pedagogic potential, makes the role of learner autonomy explicit within teaching practices. Learner autonomy is individual, intrinsic, natural and relational, and mediated by internal and external control (Nedelsky, 1989, Ryan and Deci 2000, Fazey and Fazey, 2001, Benson 2013). A shift from the external control of the tutor to the internal control of the learner indicates a recognition of the pedagogic potential of a learner's autonomy.

1.3 Context of the Study

My study takes place within an HE Institution in South East England serving a range of backgrounds, providing diverse programmes to meet varied levels of ability and interest. The majority of the programmes are vocational and include 'traditional' single and combined honours general modular scheme (GMS) programmes, with work based widening participation programmes classified as professional degrees. 79% of teaching staff are qualified teachers, placing the HEI in the top 20 for qualified teaching staff, Table 1.1 provides further contextual data. The HE Institution has maintained a Silver award on the Teaching and Excellence Framework (DfE, 2017) for its commitment to teaching and learning, demonstrated in a dominant student engagement programme, further discussed in Chapter Two, Section 2.4.

TABLE 1.1 CONTEXTUAL DATA

Faculty of Education 2017	***Numbers***
Number of Postgraduate Programmes	64
Number of Undergraduate programmes	22
Schools in the Faculty	2
Number of Teaching staff in the relevant school	75
Number of Teaching staff on the 'Stuch' Programme	12
BA Top up students on the Stuch programme	90
Foundation Degree students on the Stuch programme	120

This study focusses on one of the work-based, widening participation programmes, though it is assumed that its findings could be applied to similar programmes. For purposes of this study, the programme will be referred to as the 'Stuch' programme. Entry requirements for a two-year Foundation degree programme includes at least one year's experience of work with children, a level 3 qualification or one 'A' level and a GCSE pass in English, as well as a minimum of 15 hours work a week. Where students are unable to provide Stuch entry requirements, accessible alternatives for example, a three day 'orientation' programme in place of a level 3 qualification is offered. To complete the programme, students engage 240 credits of academic work, comprising twelve 20 credit modules over two years, followed by a BA top-up year of 120 credits. Employability is key to the programme, and entry requirements include at least 15 hours a week in the workplace. Students draw on this experience as part of their critical evaluation of theory and practice, and it is expected that on completion, students are successful with graduate employment.

In comparison to traditional counterparts, characteristics such as limited confidence and self-assurance in own academic capability, are evident with WP learners (Newbold et al., 2010). This is the case with students on the 'Stuch' programme with implications for the extent to which a role for learner autonomy is recognised and operationalised. Outcomes from discussions and communications prior to this research study, for example, staff student meetings; module evaluations and annual programme review, indicate student expectations of teaching styles that exemplify transmission or transactional modes (Ecclestone, 2002; Torrance, 2007). Students indicate a preference for tutor-led teaching; while informal discussions with colleagues on the operationalisation of learner autonomy, revealed a mix of views. These range from disagreement with encouraging learner autonomy i.e., a preference for spoon feeding teaching styles, through to views that students need to be taught to be autonomous, to learners unsystematically having high degrees of control, determining what, how and how much they wanted to do. Spoon feeding, the predominant style, is described as 'not giving someone the opportunity to act or think for oneself… a teacher-centered approach that forces the learner to become a passive receiver of knowledge' (Rahim and

Ros, 2016, p.1232). Spoon feeding is characterised by direct tutor presentations with limited active learning opportunities (ibid).

A summary of the role of learner autonomy on the programme prior to the study is one that is unprioritised, unstructured, and supplementary to tutor practices. This is demonstrated in Stuch module delivery which relies heavily on PowerPoint presentations taught directly to students. Analysis of presentations at the beginning of this study, showed there was, for nine Foundation degree modules, and six BA top-up modules, a consistent pattern of PowerPoint presentation based, tutor led teaching, with intermittent opportunities for group activities.

Considering that learner autonomy is significant to student motivation and engagement, the success of students participating through the widening participation agenda is necessary to their improved employability at the end of their studies. Thus, there are links between a learner's autonomy on the one hand, and their motivation and engagement on the other, with implications for their successful completion of HE and potential for improved employability (See figure 3.1). This creates a tension between expectations of students attaining graduateness at the end of HE as discussed above and tutor practices for Stuch module delivery.

The tension exemplifies a disorientating dilemma (Mezirow, 1997), as there is an incongruence between learner expectations and what is needed for them to attain HE outcomes. To resolve the dilemma, WP learners need to change their perspective on the role of their autonomy as learners. For this to take place, the predominant style of module delivery, a key influence on the dilemma, needs to change. Mezirow (1997) advocates a perspective transformation, which on the Stuch programme, is a change of perspective on learner autonomy by tutors and learners, to aid the attainment of full learner autonomy by the end of HE.

To achieve this change, a means by which learner autonomy is operationalised as important, structured and instrumentalised by tutors within module delivery is needed,

leading to the design and exploration of the feasibility of the ALC in this study, introduced in fig 1.1 above.

1.4 Structure of the Study

This thesis is presented in ten chapters. The current chapter has introduced the study and has outlined its professional context. Chapter Two provides the policy context. It explains the necessity for tutors to consider learner autonomy in their teaching practices, from international, national, and institutional policies which identify outcomes of learner autonomy in HE. These perspectives include an exploration of outcomes of the Bologna Process (Bologna Process Revisited, 2015), requirements for quality in teaching and learning guidance for HE institutions through the Teaching Excellence Framework (DfE, 2018), and the response of the institution to national and international initiatives with implications for learner autonomy in quality expectations and student engagement.

Chapter Three provides a review of literature on learner autonomy. This develops from the expectations and suitable conditions for learner autonomy identified in Chapter Two. It addresses problems of definition and explores two areas which constitute the ALC i.e., what tutors do, involving tutor practices with implications for learner autonomy, and how learners respond. It concludes that there are problems with identifying what learner autonomy is, due to its theoretical heterogeneity, also that individual autonomy is intrinsic, natural, and relational, and that the locus of control is a key indicator for autonomy.

Chapter Four explains the affirmative postmodern, pragmatic, mixed methods methodology adopted for this study. It clarifies two things, firstly, an epistemology that challenges hidden meanings and hegemonic nuances to address the hiddenness of learner autonomy as identified in Chapter Two. Secondly, a methodology that engages a pluralistic ontology presented by the theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy identified in Chapter Three. The chapter discusses how Instructional Design Theory (IDT) provides a means for construct design of the ALC, and how the framework for an

integrated methodology (FraIM) guides research design. The latter includes procedures for the warrantability of research claims made in this study.

Chapter Five explains the data collection procedures on the feasibility of the ALC in line with the research design in Chapter Four. This is followed by Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, which present findings and analysis from the research methods - survey, tutor tasks and tutor interviews, respectively.

Chapter Nine is a discussion and synthesis of the whole research study, involving evidence-based claims, the conceptual framework, and the policy context. This chapter includes key findings, as well as discussion of some limitations to the study. The chapter concludes the study, arguing that the research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on learner autonomy and pedagogic strategy. It also argues that by equipping tutors with a construct, there will be greater cognisance of the role of learner autonomy in tutor-student interaction and of the potential of learner autonomy to aid the process of teaching and learning, among WP learners in HE.

Chapter Ten is a reflexive account documenting the transformative experience of the researcher over the period of conducting this study.

CHAPTER TWO- POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

A key intention of this study is to establish the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. The necessity of learner autonomy to HE has been introduced in the previous chapter (Christie et al., 2001; Benson, 2013). Further justification for the importance of recognising and engaging learner autonomy within HE teaching and learning practices, is found within the HE policy context. UK HE policy influences and is influenced by strong connections with European HE policy as outlined by the European HE Area (EHEA).

This chapter provides evidence of policy expectations of learner autonomy at international, national, and institutional levels. It outlines specific detail from a policy perspective on what learner autonomy outcomes are at differing HE levels, and underlines the importance of HE tutors engaging learner autonomy in their teaching practices.

It is presented in three sections. The first section (2.2) presents an international perspective on learner autonomy, mainly through the European HE Area (EHEA) expectations of autonomy as an outcome of HE, identified in descriptors of HE qualifications gained at the end of study. Two key frameworks, the EHEA Quality Code and the European Quality Framework for life-long learning (Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks, 2005; Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008), specify expectations of learner autonomy at the end of HE study.

Section 2.3 explores the national perspective on learner autonomy in HE in England through three sources, the Teaching Excellence Framework (DfE, 2018), the Framework for HE Qualifications (FHEA), (QAA, 2014) as well as the South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC, 2016). These sources provide a view of the national response to learner autonomy in HE and consider the EHEA frameworks. To illustrate the extent to which national HE policymakers specify or imply learner autonomy as an outcome, a comparison of the UK HE qualifications framework is made

with the Australian framework. Both frameworks work to a memorandum of agreement for HE.

Section 2.4 examines the institutional perspective, through an analysis of the response of the HE institution within which this research study takes place, to expectations of learner autonomy. The institutional response is found in its adoption of principles of the FHEA, the UK Quality Code, the extent to which its key policies are student-centred, as well as its response to the TEF.

2.2 International Perspective

Learner autonomy is specified as a necessary and desirable outcome of HE in European and UK (HE) policy. The UK has been a significant participant in the development of EU policy on HE. Examples of former deep and strong ties with European Union policy on HE are evidenced by the UK's participation in the Sorbonne declaration of 1998 (Allegre et al., 1998), the Bologna declaration of 1999 (Einem et al., 1999) and the ensuing Bologna process (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). Furthermore, the UK has been a key player in the European HE Area (EHEA). The EHEA coordinates HE provision across all EU member states, to allow for mobility, parity in standards and ease of credits transfer internationally. This study recognises the possibility of a change to the role of the UK in EHEA policy, by reason of its withdrawal from the EU and plans for a future relationship.

The EHEA comprises forty-eight consenting member states and the European Commission (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018). Operating through a wider geographical frame than the European Union, the EHEA emerged from collaborations among its members, for cooperation and coherence in HE delivery, launched in March 2010 at the Budapest-Vienna ministerial conference. Broadly, the aims of the EHEA are to sustain the mobility of students and members of faculty across member states; provide for cultural development and social cohesion; increase employability for citizens of member states and position Europe internationally, as the global knowledge leader (Ibid).

The aims of the EHEA are implemented and monitored through the Bologna process by the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG). Appendix 1 presents a timeline of activity by the BFUG from Sorbonne to Yerevan (Ibid). Aspects of the timeline relevant to this study are analysed in Table 2.1 below.

TABLE 2.1: ACTIVITY OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNER AUTONOMY

Convention	**Bologna process activity relating to learner autonomy**
Bologna Declaration (Einem et al., 1999)	Easily readable and comparable degrees: leading to national qualification frameworks e.g., the UK HE Code 2014
Prague Communiqué 2001 (Lourtie, 2001)	Social dimension of mobility Life-long learning (LLL)
Berlin Communiqué 2003 (Reichert and Tauch, 2003)	Equal access
Bergen Communiqué 2005 (Dondelinger and Nyborg, 2005)	QF-EHEA adopted National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) Reinforcement of the social dimension
Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué 2009 (Leegwater and Persoons, 2009)	National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020 LLL as a public responsibility Focus on employability
Bucharest Communiqué 2012 (Bonete and Power, 2012)	Explore path to automatic recognition of academic qualifications Widening access and completion rates
Yerevan Communiqué 2015 (Gehrke and Power, 2015)	Widening Participation for Equity and Growth as a strategy for the development of the Social Dimension and Lifelong Learning in the European HE Area to 2020.

These activities have implications for learner autonomy as they are significant to student-centred initiatives for which learner autonomy is fundamental. For example, having easily readable and comparable degrees is student-centred as it facilitates the student experience across member states. Other examples, Social mobility, lifelong learning and equality are student-centred in that these policies are designed in the student interest. Brandes and Ginnis (1986, p. 12) stress the fundamentality of learner

autonomy here by asserting that in understanding student-centred approaches, there needs to be a recognition that

> …students are responsible for planning the curriculum or at least they participate in the choosing. … the individual is 100 percent responsible for his own behaviour, participation and learning.

Brandes and Ginnis' (1986) assertion provides a basis for an argument that autonomy is necessary for a learner to be responsible for, or participate in, determining what to learn, as well as how to learn. Student-centred approaches require learners to act autonomously in terms of their levels of participation and engagement with learning activity within HE. In relation to teaching and learning, student-centred approaches are pedagogic in that they require learners to explore, assess and make sense of concepts to further their own knowledge and understanding. The more exposed learners are to student-centred approaches, the more opportunity they have, to employ their autonomy; the more they employ their autonomy, the more potential they have, to engage with the pedagogic activity within student-centred approaches. Figure 2.1. illustrates the reciprocal relationship emerges between the three concepts.

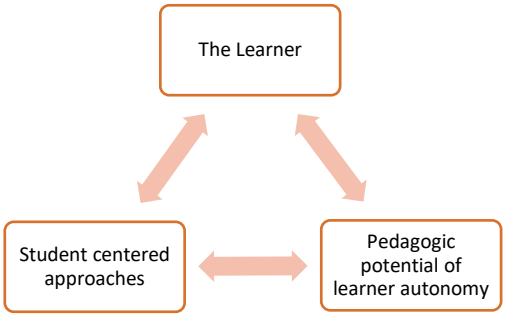

Figure 2.1: An illustration of a reciprocal relationship argued in this study

The development of student-centred learning is a constituent of the first pillar on which the EHEA rests. It was agreed at Yerevan (Bologna Process revisited, 2015) that the two main pillars of the EHEA are:

1) A common framework, which includes the overarching Framework for

Qualifications of the EHEA, a common credit system (ECTS), **common principles for the development of student-centred learning**, … a common body of methodologies and sustainable achievements produced by European HEIs.

2) A number of common tools, namely, the ECTS Users' Guide, the Diploma Supplement, the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Further exploration of principles of student-centred learning, found in two of the Bologna process activity identified in Table 2.1 above, reveals references to, and expectations of learner autonomy. These include common national qualifications (comparable degrees), and qualifications for lifelong learning which specify HE outcomes of learner autonomy.

2.2.1 Common national qualifications

Comparable degrees are recognised when members of the EHEA align their national frameworks for HE qualifications, with the overarching framework for qualifcations of the EHEA. The framework for the EHEA known as the Bologna Framework, includes the EHEA qualifications framework and the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF LLL). The UK qualifications framework is in line with the Bologna Framework (Bologna process, 2009). Descriptors of HE qualifications within the Bologna Framework, are attained at the ends of each of three cycles illustrated in Appendix 2. Referred to as the 'Dublin descriptors', they generically specify common attainment outcomes for qualifications at each level of HE.

The fifth descriptor for each of the first two cycles and the short cycle, specifies learner autonomy. The third cycle which is doctoral studies, assumes learner autonomy throughout. The short cycle qualification is gained at level 4 or 5. It may be a qualification its own right, or it may be a part of the first cycle qualification, i.e., a bachelor's degree. Extracts of learner autonomy attainment outcomes in the Dublin descriptors, are specified in Table 2.2 below.

TABLE 2.2: LEARNER AUTONOMY IN THE DUBLIN DESCRIPTORS (JOINT QUALITY INITIATIVE 2004)

Qualification	**Learner autonomy attainment outcome (Fifth Dublin Descriptor)**
Short Cycle	Have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.
First Cycle	Have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.
Second Cycle	Have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that is largely self-directed or autonomous
Third Cycle	Learner autonomy implied in all descriptors.

Analysis of the detail reveals that at each HE level, learners are expected to become increasingly autonomous. This is illustrated in an inverse relationship between tutor input and expected level of learner autonomy. As the cycles increase, tutor input decreases and expectations of learner autonomy increase. So, learners with some autonomy may gain a certificate in HE (level 4) or a foundation degree (level 5). Those completing their studies at level 6 (first cycle), i.e., Bachelor's degree, are expected to demonstrate high autonomy. At Master's degree, level 7, the second cycle, expects learners to be largely self-directed or autonomous, and in the third cycle, at doctoral level, learners are expected to be fully autonomous.

Thus, an expected outcome of HE is that through the levels, students become increasingly autonomous, with concomitant expectations of a reduction of supervision on the part of the tutors.

2.2.2. LIFE-LONG LEARNING (LLL)

The European qualifications framework for life-long learning (EQF) was proposed in 2004 in response to a need for greater transparency in qualifications across member states and relevant others (Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008). It has a much broader reach than the EHEA qualifications framework identified by the Dublin descriptors. Where the EHEA framework focuses solely on HE, the EQF provides descriptors from secondary education through to the end of HE presented through 8 levels (*ibid*). The aims of both frameworks

are similar, seeking to increase mobility for individuals across member states and increasing access and participation in lifelong learning. Furthermore, the EQF strives for 'internationalisation of qualifications' (*ibid,* p.4) by also validating learning in non-formal and informal settings, as well as, learning from institutions outside national frameworks such as transnational corporations (*ibid*).

The EQF outcomes for qualifications are embodied in descriptors of knowledge and skill expected at each of the eight levels. Knowledge within the EQF is theoretical and/or factual and is seen as the 'outcome of the assimilation of information through learning', (*ibid, 2008* p. 11). Skills are cognitive or practical. Progress in the development of skill through the eight levels, is judged by the extent to which an individual is competent, in terms of their degree of responsibility and autonomy. Appendix 3 presents the role of learner autonomy in descriptors for life-long learning skills according to the EQF.

According to the EQF LLL framework, learner autonomy is expected as early as secondary education or equivalent, at level 2. From 'some' learner autonomy at this level, learners need to progress in their level of autonomy to demonstrate responsibility in task completion and manage their own responses in problem solving situations. On commencing HE or work equivalent at level four, further degrees of autonomy are expected as learners need to be able to exercise self-management, recognise and accommodate the need for change, consider the work of others and contribute through evaluation to the improvement of work or study. At levels five and six, learners are at the equivalent of the short and first cycle of the Dublin descriptors in HE. EQF LLL expectations of learner autonomy include managing unpredictable change and being able to review own performance as well as that of others, as well as taking responsibility for decision making for self and others within an environment of uncertainty. This provides relevant detail for the autonomy expectation of the first cycle Dublin descriptor, which simply states 'a high degree of autonomy' (Table 2.2). Learner autonomy becomes a norm at levels seven and eight, equivalent to second and third cycles of the Dublin descriptors. The inverse relationship between levels of learner responsibility, and levels of tutor supervision identified with the Dublin descriptors is also identified with the EQF LLL.

A summary of indicators of learner autonomy in both the Dublin and EQF descriptors include learners taking responsibility, as well as thinking critically and reflectively. Furthermore, learner autonomy indicators include, learners' abilities to make decisions, manage self, consider and review the work of others, also make contributions to the learning of others. Characteristic of these indicators is a pedagogic potential which allies with student-centred approaches. How these indicators constitute the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy is further explained in Chapter 3.

This research study takes place during a period of uncertainty as to the future role of the UK with the EHEA. Having been an influential contributor to the process, the UK's withdrawal from the EU could lead to a minimal role for in EHEA policy development. There is a transition period during which the status quo remains. Furthermore, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), has had membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in HE (ENQA) renewed, following a successful five-year review in 2018 (QAA, 2019). This lends some direction to the possibility of a continued relationship between UK HE and Europe, outside the current political fray.

Implicit reference to learner autonomy within quality assurance is found in the next section. Here an exploration is made of the role of learner autonomy in the Teaching Excellence Framework (DfE, 2016, 2017, 2018) as well as the UK Quality Code Frameworks for HE Qualifications (QAA, 2014)

2.3 National Perspective Learner Autonomy in HE Frameworks

The national perspective on learner autonomy is investigated through the TEF (DfE, 2016, 2017, 2018), the UK Quality Code Frameworks for HE Qualifications (QAA, 2014) and the South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and transfer (SEEC, 2016). SEEC joined the Universities Association for Lifelong Learning (UALL) in 2020.

The purpose of the TEF is to recognise and reward high quality teaching and assist prospective students in making informed choices (DfE, 2016). Teaching quality according

to the TEF (DfE, 2017) comprises three criteria- Teaching Quality (TQ), Learning Environments (LE) and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (SO).

Teaching quality is gauged through student learning outcomes

> …outcomes of student learning are determined by the quality of teaching they experience, the additional support for learning that is available and what the students themselves put into their studies, supported and facilitated by the provider (*Ibid*, 2017, pg. 24).

Learner autonomy is indicated through 'what the students themselves put into their studies', it is also implied in the variety of forms of structured learning, and emphasis on the provision of, among others, stimulation and challenge, and student engagement and effort. The TQ criterion includes four strands. Appendix 4 is an extract of assessment criteria of the four stands of quality in teaching and learning (DfE, 2017 p.25). This study assumes that learner autonomy in essential to all four aspects of teaching quality.

The first strand, also labeled teaching quality (TQ), requires students' active engagement and response to challenge. Its four sub areas of engagement (TQ1), valuing teaching (TQ2), challenge (TQ3) and feedback (TQ4) are all learner autonomy based. Autonomous learners engage actively with learning and thrive on challenge (Ecclestone. 2002). Independence is a key factor of autonomy; autonomous learners use assessment and feedback to monitor their own progress. Indicators of the Dublin and EQF descriptors relevant here, include thinking critically and reflectively to manage change and unpredictability, decision making, and self-management. TQ2 – valuing teaching involves recognising and rewarding good teaching in HE. This area is further explored below, under UK standards for professional practice, which identifies how good teaching is recognised. It is inevitable that for students to engage in challenging tasks that enable rigour and stretch (TQ3) they will need to draw on their autonomy as learners, similarly to engage the benefit of tutor feedback (T4).

Learner autonomy is key to the second criterion of teaching quality - learning environments (LE) which involves the provision and use of physical and digital resources

(LE1), to aid the development of independent research skills. Students are provided opportunities for one or more of scholarship, research and professional practice (LE2). For LE3 they assess and specify their own learning needs and dispositions through personalised learning, Prowse et al. (2020) propose autonomy as one of four dimensions of personalised support systems for personalised learning. Furthermore, Keppell (2014) draws attention to personalised learning strategies necessary to equip learners to become autonomous learners, needed to enable them to traverse their lifelong learning journeys successfully.

Learner autonomy is fundamental to independent research, scholarship and managing personalised learning. Research and scholarly activity are traditionally understood as outputs of a lone individual working in isolation (Lawson, 2007). Mountz et al. (2015) argue that recognising interdependency is a characteristic of learner autonomy, and necessary for high quality research. This they argue as opposed to tokenistic, metrics-led, scholarly activity.

The third criterion of teaching quality, student outcomes and learning gain (SO), is realised through progression to further study or high-level jobs (SO1), transferable skills (SO2) and positive outcomes. Learner autonomy subsumes positive outcomes (SO3) which focusses specifically on students from disadvantaged backgrounds who need changes to the inequities within social structures addressed, to increase their chances of success.

In making judgements for awards on the TEF framework, assessors will look at core and split metrics as well as additional evidence. The aspects discussed above comprise additional evidence which constitutes an HEI's rationale for seeking the quality standard in view. Thus, recognising and engaging learner autonomy implicitly underlies these quality standards.

2.3.1 The Framework for HE Qualifications

The Framework for HE Qualifications FHEQ (QAA, 2014) provides guidance from the QAA on how HEIs are to meet expectations in awarding degrees. Table 2.3 shows the expectation of learner autonomy within the current FHEQ (2014).

TABLE 2.3: EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN THE FHEQ

FHEQ and Level (2014)	**Expectation of Learner autonomy**
UK Level 4 Certificate in HE	...the exercise of some personal responsibility. Page 21
UK Level 5 Foundation degree	…the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making. Page 23
UK Level 6 Bachelor's degree with honours	…the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility in decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts. Page 26
UK Level 7 Master's degree	…demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level. … the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility, decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations, the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development. Page 28

Learner autonomy is unspecified yet assumed between levels 4 and 6. In some places learner autonomy is implied. The extent of implicitness of learner autonomy is illustrated in a comparison with the Australian framework which is also influenced by the EHEA Code. This comparison is important as it demonstrates the hiddenness of learner autonomy in the language of FHEQ i.e., it is not explicitly specified.

2.3.2 Comparison with the Australian Code

The Australian Quality code for HE (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2013) is influenced by European model for HE through its memorandum of cooperation with the UK Quality Assurance Agency for HE. There is greater cohesion between the UK and Australia than the UK and countries within the EHEA due to the memorandum of cooperation (QAA and TEQSA, 2016) signed between the UK QAA HE and Australia's Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). The Australian code makes explicit reference to learner autonomy, in contrast to the FHEQ, for example at level 4, an expected outcome of 'some personal responsibility' for the UK Certificate in HE implies but does not state learner autonomy.

> "Holders of a Certificate of HE will have …qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility…" (QAA, 2014, pg. 21).

On the other hand, quality indicators for the equivalent Level 5 Diploma qualification in the Australian counterpart, specify learner autonomy:

> "Graduates at this level [Diploma] will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters… with personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex… with initiative and judgement to organise the work of self and others and plan, coordinate and evaluate the work of teams within broad but generally well-defined parameters" (DfESE, 2013, pgs. 38 -39).

This pattern carries on for all higher degree levels further outlined in Appendix 5. The closest to learner autonomy UK descriptors specify is, 'some personal responsibility' at level 4, followed by 'the exercise of personal responsibility' through to Masters' level. Doctoral level descriptors are further removed from an explicit reference to learner autonomy.

There is freedom for member states and HEIs to interpret EHEA frameworks independently and contextually, as noted in the review of the Bologna process (Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008), however, this study questions the extent to which the implied presentation of learner autonomy within the UK Code may undermine its

pedagogic potential, as limited emphasis continues within HE pedagogic practices. Credits accumulation and transfer expectations call for further exploration of this issue.

2.3.3 Learner Autonomy within Credits Accumulation and Transfer

Emphasis on the importance of learner autonomy in UK HE policy literature is also made by Credits Accumulation and Transfer (CAT).

Credit level descriptors are categorized in five dimensions. Learner autonomy is relevant to all five dimensions, however, stated explicitly in the 'Setting' dimension only which is first and most prioritized. Strands of 'Setting' are 1) Operational context and 2) Autonomy and responsibility for actions:

> The context in which learning takes place and the autonomy expected of the learner is an important aspect of defining the level at which learning is taking place… The setting in which a learner is operating is particularly important in interpreting other descriptors thus this dimension is highlighted first.
> (SEEC, 2016, p.6)

Other dimensions include- Knowledge and understanding, Cognitive skills, Performance and practice, and Personal and enabling skills. Descriptors identifying expectations of the role of learner autonomy in settings is outlined in Table 2.4 below.

TABLE 2.4: EXPECTATIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN CREDIT ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFER (SEEC, 2016)

Setting	Autonomy and responsibility for actions
Level 3	Acts largely under direction or supervision within defined guidelines. Takes responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures
Level 4	Acts with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines. Takes responsibility for the nature and quality of outputs
Level 5	Acts with limited supervision and direction within defined guidelines accepting responsibility for achieving personal and/or group outcomes and or outputs
Level 6	Acts with minimal supervision or direction within agreed guidelines, taking responsibility for accessing support and accepting accountability for determining and achieving personal and/or group outcomes
Level 7	Acts with initiative in decision-making and accessing support within professional or given guidelines, accepting full accountability for outcomes.

Level 8	Acts autonomously and with initiative often in a professional capacity with responsibility for self and often others

Learner autonomy is fundamental to the HE settings, as the levels on table 2.4 increase, the inverse relationship, noted with the Dublin descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative, 2004) and the EQF LLL (Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008), between the actions of the tutor and the autonomous response of the learner is clear. Learners are expected to respond with increasing levels of responsibility with a reduction in supervision as the levels progress. This supports a need for an explicit recognition of the pedagogic potential learner autonomy. Expectations of teaching practices at HE levels are found in the UK standards for professional practice (Advance HE, 2011), which provides a means by which good teaching in HE is recognised. The standards identify three areas of professional practice in HE; among these three, learner autonomy is assumed but not explicitly identified.

According to the UK standards, HE tutors are to carry out specific activity, have certain knowledge, and possess certain values (Advance HE, 2011). The five areas of 'Activity' (Appendix 6) guide tutors on what to do in relation to learning, for example, to plan, teach, and support; to assess and provide feedback and be current in area of specialism. It refers specifically to developing effective environments and approaches to student support. There is no specific detail as what these areas of activity entail. The credit level descriptors discussed above, are specific as what is required of a learner participating in a module or programme of study. However, there is no connection between the standards tutors are required have, to deliver modules or programmes, and the outcomes a student should demonstrate on completing a module or programme of study. For example, credit level descriptors prioritise the learning environment (setting) as key to the five dimensions of learning. Thus, it is logical that to create effective learning environments as requested in the UK professional standards, tutors are guided in line with the settings dimension of the credit descriptors. However, there is no further detail beyond 'Develop effective learning environments…', neither is there any reference between both sets of guidance. The same argument applies to the learning environments strand (LE) in the TEF discussed above.

The UK professional standards framework is silent on how tutors can achieve the standards. This has implications for tutor understanding of the pedagogic value of learner autonomy, as these standards are at the forefront of tutor recognition and development. A HE tutor is more likely to engage with the UKPSF than the SEEC credit level descriptors.

This is a significant issue since learner autonomy is a necessary outcome of HE. If teaching practices do not involve learner autonomy, chances of it being engaged are likely to be reduced.

In summary, at national level, learner autonomy is implicit rather than explicit, it is noted in the Teaching Excellence Framework, (DfE, 2017), and the Framework for HE Qualifications (QAA, 2014). It is non-existent in the UK Professional Standards Framework, yet explicitly specified in the UK Credit Forum.

2.4 Learner Autonomy at Institutional level

The previous sections in this chapter have established that learner autonomy is a necessary outcome at varying levels of both further and higher education. It has also been established that learner autonomy includes several indicators as surmised above. This section explores the institution's policy response to student access to indicators of learner autonomy through the framework for awards, student-centredness and the institution's response to the TEF.

2.4.1. The HEI and the Framework for HE Awards UK

The HEI's regulations for the conferment of awards mandate that all awards be assigned a level in the UK framework for HE qualifications. It further requires that programme learning outcomes must be in line with the framework's level descriptors.

This clarifies that all awards are in line with the Bologna Framework as discussed above. It has been established that learner autonomy is an expectation at each level. The HEI uses the term 'level' to refer to level descriptors as defined by the FHEQ. The FHEQ level

descriptors are reference points for outcomes of learning leading to a qualification (QAA, 2014).

Since the HEI's awards are in line with the FHEQ, the learner autonomy attainment outcomes outlined in Table 2.2 should emanate from teaching practices across the institution.

2.4.2. STUDENT CENTEREDNESS

The HEI quality manual (HEI X Quality Manual 2018-2019) provides standards of expectations of all activity within the institution geared toward the achievement of its aims. Of several areas of consideration, student representation, engagement and partnership constitute the institution's policy response to student centeredness.

Student representation involves engagement and partnership (HEI X Quality Manual 2018-2019, p. 12) these two areas of representation requires student's active engagement as well as, student review of performance of self and others. Engagement and partnership is essential and involves all levels within the HEI. A key indicator of student engagement is their involvement in review of teaching and learning for example through module evaluations, and the extent to which learners are proactive in decision making processes, for example students are invited to contribute to the TQ2 strand – Valuing tutors by nominating staff who have made a difference to their learning experience.

Innovative and flexible approaches to mode of study, allow for student centeredness as well as student involvement in the HEI quality assurance process. Recent programme validations include academic direction sessions during which students carry out independent tasks. Academic direction tasks require student active engagement and self-direction, through which students bring their thoughts and ideas to the teaching and learning process.

Staff student liaison meetings centre on students' proactively communicating their experience of teaching and learning. This student-centred activity requires learner autonomy for the necessary student engagement and participation.

2.4.3. The Teaching Excellence Framework

The institution's response to the TEF is published within the TEF submission in 2017. The HEI's Silver TEF Award recognises the institution's commitment to widening participating and long-term graduate employability. Learner autonomy is implied in the three key areas of Teaching quality, Learning Environments, and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain (HEI X TEF Submission, 2017).

Two learner autonomy related measures of impact on student outcomes and learning gain, include improvement in Personal Development between Level 4 and the final year of study, and high UKES ratings for Critical Thinking, Interacting with Staff, as well as Reflecting and Connecting.

Learner autonomy has a role in Teaching Quality through programme design and delivery that '…enables students to develop as independent learners, engage with teaching underpinned by research, and reach their full potential' (HEI X TEF Submission, 2017, p.6)

The institution's student engagement strategy encourages students as partners in learning, supported by students and staff members working in partnership to attain academic goals.

Students have access to engage autonomously through the HEI's Partners in Learning programme which encourages collaboration on a range of learning and teaching programmes. Students design and deliver alongside tutors on several projects, with a focus on varied aspects of the student experience.

Students are encouraged to carry out and publish their research interests. The institution's Annual Learning and Teaching Conference provides opportunities for students to publish their contributions in the Student Engagement in HE Journal.

2.5 Conclusion

A justification for research attention to learner autonomy in HE teaching has been made from an examination of policy perspectives at international, national, and institutional levels, which stress the position of learner autonomy as an expected outcome at all levels of learning. The examination reveals the importance of student centeredness in HE policy, the relationship between learners, student centeredness, and the need to understand the suitable conditions for engaging learner autonomy; as well as the hiddenness of learner autonomy in HE policy.

The hiddenness is identified in the omission of learner autonomy from the 5 areas of the UK PSF, moreover the term 'learner autonomy' is neither explicit in the degree outcomes in the Framework for Higher Education, nor in the teaching quality strands of the TEF.

In summary, fundamental, suitable conditions for engaging learner autonomy in HE include tutors' provision of student-centred activity and the learner's response which requires decreasing levels of tutor supervision, as well as an overt expression of the role of learner autonomy in teaching and learning.

The next chapter is a review of literature on learner autonomy, further exploring suitable conditions for fostering learning autonomy by examining tutor practices and learner responses.

Chapter Three- Learner Autonomy

3.1 Introduction

The necessity of learner autonomy as an outcome of HE has been established in the two previous chapters. Given the right conditions, learners can learn by being directed, by self-initiated activity, or in collaboration with peers (Knowles, 1980; Boud, 2005). The proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in this study, has been described in section 1.2 – as the extent to which learners take the initiative, are proactive and are independent in acquiring new knowledge and skills. This includes the degree of their natural or acquired tendency to engage autonomous actions as learners (Benson, 2013). Tutors engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in their teaching practices, by fostering appropriate or suitable conditions. In other words, they provide a learning environment which fosters attitudes of autonomy in learning.

This review of literature is majorly of approaches outside learner autonomy in language learning. There is a dominance of studies of learner autonomy in language learning, for example, a simple online search resulted in a ratio of 6:1. These studies are not considered in this review of literature as learner autonomy in language learning follows a linear progression of proficiency from beginner to advanced, e.g., Littlewood, (1997); Nunan, (1997); Macaro, (2005). This study is about learner autonomy in teaching and learning in general, which is non-linear and dynamic, in that a learner may attain full autonomy in one aspect of a programme and lack autonomy on others, thus a different perspective of learner autonomy from language learning. Furthermore, this chapter is a review of literature on suitable conditions for learner autonomy in general teaching and learning.

The chapter concludes that suitable conditions are found where tutors allow for the reciprocal relationship between the learner, the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy and student-centred activity. They include tutor's recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy introduced in Chapter One and student-centred activity derived within the previous chapter from policy expectations within the

Dublin Descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative Meeting, 2004) and the EQF LLL (Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008). Student-centred activities include opportunities to take responsibility, as well as think critically and reflectively (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Candy, 1991). In addition, opportunities to engage in decision making, self-management, and consideration of others. A focus on suitable conditions provides a conceptual framework for an exploration of literature on learner autonomy for this study.

The framework grounds the newly argued pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in existing literature, identifies issues with understanding learner autonomy, including problems of theoretical heterogeneity and the tendency of received wisdom to conflate the whole with its parts, and explores types of student-centred activity which constitute suitable conditions.

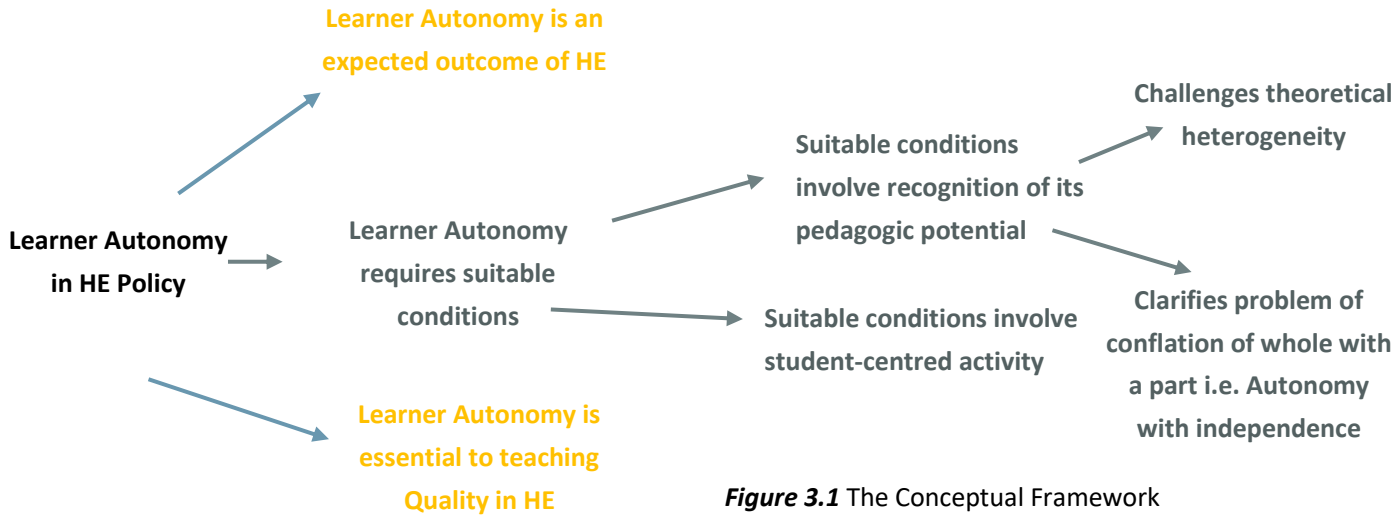

Figure 3.1 The Conceptual Framework

Focusing on suitable conditions, provides a conceptual framework for an exploration of literature on learner autonomy for this study. The framework structures this investigation of literature on what tutors do and how learners respond and, allows for underlying literature to justify the notion of there being a pedagogic potential to learner autonomy.

This review of literature has five objectives:

1) To set the context for the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, by discussing the problematic issues of conflation and definition. This specifies the view of learner autonomy within this study.

2) To explore what tutors do i.e., the external conditions which mitigate the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

3) To discuss learners' response to tutor activity i.e., the internal conditions which could be fostered or otherwise by what tutors do.

4) To clarify the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, according to this study.

5) To discuss existing learner autonomy constructs and clarify their limitations in recognising the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, necessitating a need for the ALC.

3.2 Problematic issues of conflation and definition

Many descriptions of individual autonomy in the work of influential advocates of self-directed learning such as, Rogers (1969), Boud (1981), Steinberg and Silverberg (1986), state or imply a synonymity with independence. On the one hand, there is a strong argument that independence is closely related with autonomy, however this study views independence as a characteristic part of the whole concept of autonomy. This is better explained by looking at the antonyms of both terms. Mariani (1997, p. 1) contrasts the need for autonomy 'with its opposite, the need for dependence'. Mariani's view of dependence as the opposite of autonomy, conflates it with independence, in line with the assumptions of others. The actual opposite of autonomy is heteronomy; Kant explained the concept of autonomy and its opposite heteronomy (Kant, 1922; Rodl, 2007). Similarly, theoretical accounts (See relational autonomy 3.2.1) identify that autonomy involves both independence and dependence. The notion of a 'social contract' (Rousseau/Cole, 1923), which recognises the need for the independence of an individual to be integrated with the independence of others to gain autonomy, marked an early understanding of interdependence. Interdependence accepts that autonomy involves a type of relational dependence (Nedelsky, 1989; Christman, 2004).

3.2.1 Relational Autonomy

Nedelsky's (1989) relational autonomy explains the social nature of individual autonomy and clarifies the relationship between autonomy, independence, and dependence. Relational autonomy recognises the inherent social nature of human beings and challenges a neo liberal, western, individualistic representation of autonomy. Relational autonomy rejects an individualistic autonomy, where an individual in being autonomous, has no need or recourse to engage with others to realise their goals.

Nedelsky (1989) defines autonomy by its literal meaning which is 'to find one's own law' (pg.10)

> …First…the capacity to find one's own law can develop only in the context of relations with others…that nurture this capacity, and second, that the "content" of one's own law is comprehensible only with reference to shared social norms, values, and concepts.

Autonomy develops from an internalisation of the individual's experiences of engagement with others and self-reflection. It comes from within but is developed by external conditions through social interaction, as it is impossible to learn, grow or achieve anything without engagement with others in one way or another (Nedelsky, 1989). Thus, autonomy involves interdependence which combines both aspects of independence and dependence.

Interdependence acknowledges that there are circumstances under which an autonomous individual may oscillate between being independent, and dependent, yet remain autonomous. Interdependence theory further explains this through the concept of covariation of corresponding interests (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Rusbult and Van Lange, 2008). Due to there being a correspondence between the interests of individuals, there may be a level of dependence on the part of one, but no power differential between the individuals concerned, so autonomy is retained for the dependent party. Thus, being autonomous does not preclude being dependent.

Interdependence as outlined by Nedelsky's (1989) relational autonomy and Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) covariation of corresponding interests, explains that independence and

dependence are both parts of autonomy. This is further explained by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan and Deci, 2000) discussed below, and challenges the common misconception that dependence is the opposite of autonomy, which conflates autonomy and independence.

3.2.2 Autonomy and Heteronomy

Arguments by Weinstein et al. (2012), as well as SDT, support the theoretical perspective on heteronomy. Weinstein et al. (2012) and SDT explain the position of heteronomy in understanding autonomy. SDT presents a psychological perspective on autonomy and heteronomy. According to SDT, autonomy should not be conflated with independence, and choices people make whether dependent or independent may be indicative of autonomy. In addition, autonomy may be individual or social.

> …within SDT, autonomy refers not to being independent, detached, or selfish but rather to the feeling of volition that can accompany any act, whether dependent or independent, collectivist or individualist… we do not equate autonomy with independence or individualism (pg.74).

Proponents of SDT are specific in identifying heteronomy as opposite to autonomy, which is the position this study takes.

> "According to SDT, the opposite of autonomy is not dependence but rather heteronomy, in which one's actions are experienced as controlled by forces that are phenomenally alien to the self or that compel one to behave in specific ways regardless of one's values or interests" (Chirkov et al., 2003, pg. 98).

Weinstein et al. (2012), in their study on autonomous functioning explain that to be autonomous involves being dependent or independent relative to context. Weinstein et al. (2012) recognise the possibility of autonomous dependence, 'Autonomy is distinguished from independence, in that individuals can be willing or autonomously dependent…' (p.397). This study addresses this issue by inducting four proposed degrees of autonomy outlined in Table 3.1 below.

TABLE 3.1: FOUR DEGREES OF AUTONOMY

Adapted from Building resilience, states of autonomy Ladenika (2017, p.43)

	Dependent	**Independent**
Autonomous	Autonomous Dependent (AD*)* Learner positions self to be dependent on others to gain knowledge skills and abilities required to become autonomous *Partially dependent*	Autonomous (A) Learner has acquired knowledge, skills and abilities and is confident in this acquisition. *Fully independent*
Heteronomous	Heteronomous (H) Learner is positioned by others to acquire knowledge skills and abilities needed to be less dependent. *Fully dependent*	Heteronomous Independent (HI) Learner has acquired knowledge, skills and abilities yet needs affirmation from others to be confident in this acquisition. *Partially independent*

The degrees of autonomy draw on the ideas of SDT and Kant (1922) to highlight states in the development of learner autonomy. These states identify relationships between dependence, independence, autonomy, and heteronomy. They are loosely modelled on Bernstein's Code Theory (2004), and Maton 's Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (2014). LCT had intentions for developing autonomy codes (published later in June 2018). These approaches attempt to address social problems by identifying the organising principles of social interactions and devising codes to expose and explain hidden relations.

Autonomous and heteronomous are two degrees of learner autonomy which have been discussed. Autonomous dependence is one of the four degrees which explains the need for autonomous individuals to be dependent on others to achieve specific aims (Weinstein et al., 2012). In addition to the three degrees of learner autonomy mentioned so far, is heteronomous independence. This study's argument for heteronomous independence fills a gap in the literature in relation to degrees of learner autonomy. Heteronomous independence has been syllogised as an antonym of autonomous dependence.

3.2.3 Definition: The problem of theoretical heterogeneity

It is commonplace to find that most attempts to explain learner autonomy, allude to its problem of theoretical heterogeneity. The problem of the theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy, is a term coined within this study in response to Hmel and Pincus (2002, pg.278) who argue that autonomy is 'a construct lacking theoretical homogeneity as well as a consistent common operational definition'. In other words, autonomy is theoretically heterogenous by reason of the multiplicity of contexts within which it is applied, engaged, or viewed.

Everhard (2013) and Oxford (2008) argue that a problem with the term 'autonomy' is its multiple views, as different authors mean different things in its application. Autonomy is multifaceted with views from a range of disciplines including 'medicine and nursing, bioethics, genetics… business and organizational management and philosophy' (Benson, 2013, pg. 15). Where there is a multiplicity of contexts, inconsistencies as to the nature of a concept are bound to emerge. For example, in language learning, learner autonomy is assumed to develop in a linear manner, from zero to complete autonomy in line with learner proficiency (Macaro, 1997); however, in teaching and learning, e.g., Scott et al's. (2015) study presents the development of learner autonomy as non- linear. In the former context, Macaro's (1997) participants aim for proficiency in language use. In the latter, Scott et al's. (2015) participants aim to acquire curricular concepts and related skills. Thus, the context within which learner autonomy is expected, shapes the form it takes in the views of the actors involved.

Furthermore, theoretical heterogeneity or multiple perspectives have problematic implications for research. Scott et al. (2015, pg. 946) draw attention to a limitation to 'inter-study comparisons…', due to inconsistencies in definition. Learner autonomy could benefit from inter-study comparisons in the development of its research. However, inconsistencies in definition across several disciplines, makes inter-study comparison problematic and possibly untenable.

This study argues that although the problem of theoretical heterogeneity for learner autonomy may persist, suitable conditions for its engagement are consistent. This is

demonstrated through a review of the respective conditions of what tutors do and how learners respond.

3.3 What Tutors do- Tutor practices

Watkins and Mortimore explain pedagogy as 'any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another' (1999, p. 3). These actions are essentially external, one engaging the internal conditions of another. This section on what tutors do, examines the relationship between the learner and the external conditions of the teaching and learning environment. It focusses on how the internal condition of learner autonomy, is mitigated by the external conditions of teaching and learning.

Three main pedagogical approaches are examined here. Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) deep and surface learning, Ecclestone's (2002) three approaches to teaching with implications for learner autonomy and Freire's (1974,1986) Banking education.

3.3.1 Deep and Surface Learning

Prosser and Trigwell (1999), in researching approaches to teaching and learning, state that tutor teaching strategies may impact students' learning strategies. Building on Dall'Alba's (1991) work on HE teachers' understanding of pedagogy, they identify five approaches to teaching in HE which may have outcome implications for learner autonomy illustrated in Tables 3.2 and 3.3 below.

TABLE 3.2 - APPROACHES TO TEACHING IN HE A TO C - PROSSER AND TRIGWELL (1999)

Approach	**Explanation**	**Type of Learner**
Approach A	Teacher focussed – teacher as transmitter of information as teacher determines	Surface Learners
Approach B	Teacher focussed- intention for learners to acquire concepts as the discipline determines	Surface Learners
Approach C	Teacher/Student interaction- intention to acquire concepts as the discipline determines	Surface/deep Learners

Approaches A and B are teacher focused. This clarifies that control is with the teacher and external to the learners. There is transmission of information and concept acquisition. According to Prosser and Trigwell (1999), the learning that takes place, is on the 'surface'- learners may accurately regurgitate concepts but could have limited deep understanding, such as that required for application or critical engagement. Thus, conditions leading to surface learning are externally controlled by the teacher, and learners are less likely to be motivated as the locus of control is external. More about this is discussed below through SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000), Fazey and Fazey (2001) and Weinstein et al. (2013)

On one hand, a lower sense of autonomy leads to lower levels of competence (Ryan and Deci, 2000). This is counterproductive to the aims of teaching and learning, highlighting a disadvantage of teaching approaches which solely involve transmission and acquisition of concepts. On the other hand, transmission and acquisition approaches to teaching are sometimes necessary. For example, they have a role in enabling learners gain the threshold concepts of certain disciplines. Meyer and Land (2005, p.373) advocate that in some HE disciplinary areas learners need to acquire 'irreversible conceptual transformations' of knowledge. This foundational acquisition facilitates engagement with the rest of the discipline and may involve teacher focused approaches. Though concepts are initially acquired at a surface level, later application allows for deeper understanding and student focused engagement. Table 3.3 below illustrates Prosser and Trigwell's student focused approaches.

TABLE 3.3 - APPROACHES TO TEACHING IN HE D AND E - PROSSER AND TRIGWELL (1999)

Approach	**Explanation**	**Type of Learner**
Approach D	Student focussed aimed at students developing their own conceptions	Deep learners
Approach E	Student focussed aimed at students changing their conception	Deep learners

Student focussed or student-centred approaches are aimed at developing students' own conceptions of knowledge as well as changing their conceptions. This can only take place

subject to the internal conditions of the learner, and according to Meyer and Land (2005, p.374) at HE levels, involves the development of a new language for new concepts

> "… as students acquire threshold concepts and extend their use of language in relation to these concepts, there occurs also a shift in the learner's subjectivity, a repositioning of the self."

Therefore, external conditions presented by the tutor lead to a shift in the internal conditions of the learner, the internal shift is indicative of autonomy by authorship and internal control (Weinstein et al., 2012). This is congruent with Ecclestone (2002, p.35) who identifies 'the processes and conditions that enable people to act autonomously' as necessary to the attainment of autonomy as an 'educational and social goal'.

3.3.2 Transmission Transaction and Transformation

The terms transmission, transaction and transformation are descriptors used by Ecclestone (2002) to explain three styles of teaching which foster specific types of learner autonomy. These three terms are useful in this section for discussing the ideas of both Freire (1974, 1986) and Ecclestone (2002) on transmission, interactional (or transactional) and transformational approaches to teaching and learning. Freire's critique of transmission approaches through his banking model of education, emphasises salient issues with sole, externally controlled teaching, and implications of this for learner autonomy.

Freire argues that autonomy is a characteristic of humanness (Freire, 1974). He proposes a 'contradiction of oppression' where those positions of authority, be they individual or institutional could put those under their authority in a position where they refuse liberty for the fear of uncertainty. Freire exemplified this through the Teacher/Student contradiction, illustrated by his 'banking model of education' in which he identifies ten attitudes and practices (Freire, 1986)

These attitudes and practices are in line with a transmission approach to teaching. Similar to Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) approaches A and B, where the teacher is the transmitter and learners are acquirers; a transmission approach fosters heteronomy rather than autonomy in learners.

The language and presentation of Freire's banking model of education is an outcome of its origin in the struggles for liberation, in a society characterised by mass inequality and oppression. This limits the universality of its application, though in principle, it may have a contribution to make in understanding learner autonomy in the context of this study. Another problem with Freire's approach is absolutism, not only of the view of the problem of oppression, but also of its solution (Taylor, 1993). In applying an absolutist view of oppressor and oppressed to the classroom situation, Freire's arguments may replicate the same act of privileging an espoused narrative. The situation of the oppressed is not a clear and direct type of the situation of a learner, neither does the oppressor likewise match the teacher. In other words, "…denounced silence, massification and oppression, [do] not match in practice the subliminal messages and modes of a Banking System of education" Taylor (1993, p.148).

Freire's solution to banking education is a liberating education which is transactional and potentially transformative. It proposes to 'guide, direct, convince and even 'convert', without prescribing (Freire and Shor 1987, p.45), through a strategy of persistent patience based on hope, a tutor uses dialogue to express and defend a position, until the student comes round to their way of thinking. Where this takes time, the tutor then must initiate progress for the student (Freire and Shor 1987, p.157).

A resolution to the concept of 'a banking model of education' is to engage the autonomy of the learner. Contemporary tutor practices recognise and may avoid teaching styles indicative of Freire's banking model of education; yet may not view engaging learner autonomy as a resolution to this problem in their pedagogic practices. Ecclestone (2002) addresses this through three styles of teaching: transmission, transactional and transformative.

According to Ecclestone (2002), a transmission style of teaching elicits a procedural type of autonomy. This style of teaching is teacher focused and involves set criteria being communicated. The more compliant learners are to the set procedures, the greater their level of procedural autonomy. Ecclestone (2002) argues that learners who have procedural autonomy are proactive, independent, self-reliant, and articulate. However, they lack the ability to critically engage with the process and content of their learning. This is due to them knowing what they should do, but not knowing the reasons why it is done. A question arises as to how a learner can be both proactive and compliant within the same set of parameters? An answer could be found in an analysis of degrees of autonomy (Table 3.1) through the concepts of autonomous dependence or heteronomous independence.

An autonomous dependent learner (Weinstein et al., 2013) has the attitudes of a fully autonomous learner, but not the knowledge or expertise for a specific activity, for example a novice learning to fly a small plane may have the organisational skills to arrange lessons, be punctual, listen, complete set tasks, etc.; but is in the process of knowing what to do to fly the small plane safely and successfully. Whilst taking lessons, being in the process of becoming a reliable pilot, the learner is autonomously dependent. There may be procedural autonomy, in being proactive in knowing what they need to do to engage in taking flying lessons, yet they are also compliant in following the instructions necessary to develop as a fully autonomous pilot. Ecclestone's procedural autonomy explains Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) approaches A and B which lead to surface learning as discussed above. Her transmission style of teaching is similar to Freire's (1974) banking model of education. Procedural autonomy may be argued as more likely to elicit dependence, which is needed for a specific period until the necessary knowledge and skill is acquired. Where the learner does not progress, learner heteronomy rather than autonomy could result.

Ecclestone's (2002) second pedagogical approach is transactional. This elicits a state of personal autonomy in the learner. There is a shift from the teacher to the learner through negotiated transactions. Learners develop personally as self-regulated, self-

directed and self-knowledgeable individuals. Both teachers and learners are co-constructors in the acquisition of knowledge, thus learners are active rather than passive. Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) approach C further explain a transactional pedagogy, the tutor controls the learning interaction to attain conceptual acquisition which is as the discipline determines and therefore, external to the learner. Learners emerge as surface or deep learners. In the example of learning to fly a small plane, the autonomous dependent learner progresses from having procedural autonomy to having personal autonomy. The novice pilot is more active in discussions and ideas on how to fly the plane, procedural aspects e.g., safety procedures no longer need to be instructed or explained. The tutor is still in control of the teaching learning relationship; however, the student has a measure of control as well.

Ecclestone's (2002) third pedagogical approach is transformative. This fosters a critical autonomy. There is a complete shift of focus from teacher to learner. Critical autonomy is indicative of a development of thinking, critical reflection, and engagement. A transformative pedagogical approach encourages a reciprocal teacher-learner relationship, whereby actors involved teach each other, and learn from each other (Freire, 1986); such an environment also considers the ethical implications of pedagogical action and subject matter. Students can challenge and learn from other students, thus there is also reciprocal teaching and learning exchanges between students. Transformative teaching approaches take place within the learner. A transformation by its very nature is internal (Mezirow, 2000). Thus, critical autonomy, though fostered externally by the environment provided by the teacher, is controlled internally, as it is evidenced in the transformation of the learner.

Transformative teaching and critical autonomy align with Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) teaching approaches D and E which involves learners developing and changing their conceptions of knowledge. Ecclestone's transformative teaching also explains Meyer and Land's (2005) shift in learner subjectivity and repositioning of self. The learner having gone through several liminal states of acquiring threshold concepts, has reached an equilibrium, demonstrated in the use of a new disciplinary language and engagement

with new conceptually bounded spaces. By analogy, the newly qualified pilot is no longer a novice, they are fully autonomous. They can fly the plane safely and successfully. They can also critically examine procedures and suggest new ways of seeing and doing things.

Ecclestone's (2002) arguments exemplify the relationship between the external conditions provided by the tutor and the internal conditions mitigating the learner's autonomy. The learner's ability to think has an important role in this relationship. Ecclestone (2002) argues that critical autonomy indicates that learners have had opportunities for thinking, critical reflection, and engagement. Thinking and critical reflection are two of several indicators which discharge the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy as surmised from investigating policy on learner autonomy in HE, in the previous chapter.

In summary, what tutors do, has significant implications for the development of learner autonomy. Tutors provide controlled conditions for learning which should involve a gradual shift in control from the tutor to the learner, as student competence increases. A student-centred learning environment aims at developing competence in learners through a shift in control of learning activity from tutor to learner.

3.4 How Learners Respond

In relation to autonomy, a learner's response to what a tutor does has psychological roots. This involves the learner's individual disposition to autonomy within the teaching and learning relationship. Reeve et al. (2004, p.34) acknowledge the importance of a psychological need for learner autonomy; learners have a "psychological need to experience one's behaviour as emanating from or endorsed by the self rather than being initiated by forces or events that feel alien or with which they do not identify".

This study will focus on three psychological approaches which provide clear explanations of the relationship between external and internal conditions for individual autonomy. These are Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET), a subsidiary of Self-determination Theory

(SDT) proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000), the ideas of Fazey and Fazey (2001) on autonomy, in addition, autonomous functioning as propounded by Weinstein et al. (2012).

3.4.1 Cognitive Evaluation Theory

(A sub theory of SDT)

SDT views autonomy as necessary for self-regulation. Self-regulation involves autonomous people managing their own behaviour in line with their intrinsic motivation. 'Self-Determination Theory is specifically framed in terms of social and environmental factors that facilitate versus undermine intrinsic motivation' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.58). Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) is a sub theory of SDT, which explains autonomy. According to CET, autonomy is necessary to enhance intrinsic motivation. Humans are naturally, intrinsically, motivated to explore their environments and learn, and levels of motivation are mediated by competence. Autonomy, which is also the individual's internal perceived locus of causality (IPLOC), is necessary to enable an individual's level of competence to enhance their intrinsic motivation. Thus 'for a high level of intrinsic motivation people must experience satisfaction of the needs both for competence and autonomy' (p.58).

The converse further explains the relationship between an individual's autonomy and their intrinsic motivation according to CET. Extrinsic motivators undermine intrinsic motivation. There arises a shift from the IPLOC which is the individual's autonomy to an external locus of causality. The locus of causality identifies where the control is. Participants in studies on CET (Ryan and Deci, 2000), demonstrated reduced intrinsic motivation when they perceived that they were being externally controlled. However, where there was choice and the opportunity for self-direction, there was enhanced intrinsic motivation provided by a greater sense of autonomy.

Returning to the example of the pilot, CET explains that for them continue to want to learn, they need be able progress to carrying out the correct procedures without being guided to do so. This develops with competence. Control (IPLOC) resides in competence,

which in turn, motivates the student further. The student experiences satisfaction that they are developing competence in what to do and has access to carry out what they know without interference. This motivates further engagement and fosters a higher sense of autonomy. If the flying instructor offers motivation, which is outside the learner's own sense of competence in aspects necessary to fly the plane, the locus of control moves from the learner's competence to the external motivator e.g., an external reward. Thus, control gained by the learner shifts back to the instructor, the learner becomes less intrinsically motivated and has a lower sense of autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

3.4.2 Motivation Control and Competence

Fazey and Fazey (2001), view autonomy in a different way from CET (Ryan and Deci, 2000). According to CET autonomy is subsidiary to motivation. Fazey and Fazey (2001) consider motivation to be one of three key elements of autonomy; the other two being internal locus of control, and perceived competence (pp. 346-358), in this view, motivation is subsidiary to autonomy. Both approaches agree that autonomous people are 'intrinsically motivated', able to control decision making and take responsibility for those decisions (Fazey and Fazey, 2001, p. 345). The motivation of non-autonomous (or heteronomous) people on the other hand is extrinsic.

Extrinsic motivation according to Fazey and Fazey (2001) comprises 3 types of regulation – identified regulation similar to intrinsic motivation, however action is not initiated by the learner but by an external entity; introjected regulation where motivation is internal but regulated by a fear of failure, or stimulus other than by an interest in the task; and external regulation where reasons for action are stimulated and controlled externally (Fazey and Fazey, 2001, p. 347).

Fazey and Fazey's (2001) second indicator of autonomy is a locus of control. Their principle of a of locus of control is similar to Ryan and Deci's locus of causality. A high locus of control is indicative of autonomy, as is CET's internal perceived locus of

causality. A low locus of control is indicative of non-autonomy (or heteronomy), similar to CET's external perceived locus of causality.

Fazey and Fazey's third indicator of autonomy is competence. A person's perception of competence is mediated by a self-appraisal of competence. A high perception of competence is indicative of autonomy and is characterised by attributes such as "persistence, challenge, interest, curiosity, resilience to failure, and a commitment to progress" (Fazey and Fazey, 2001, p. 346). Thus, they argue that to be autonomous is to be intrinsically motivated, have a high locus of control as well as a high perception of own competence.

3.4.3 Authorship Interest taking and Susceptibility to Control

CET and Fazey and Fazey's (2001) perspectives on autonomy are akin to Weinstein et al's. (2012) dispositional autonomy, which includes Authorship/Self-congruence, Interest-taking and Susceptibility to control.

Authorship/Self-congruence is indicative of autonomy in individuals as they make choices and take responsibility for them. Interest taking is a reflexive action in autonomous individuals. Hmel and Pincus (2002) explain interest-taking as self-awareness and reflection on experiences which motivate a learner to act. Thus, interest taking involves motivation, i.e., the sense of satisfaction in learners that their own autonomous action has contributed to their outcomes.

Susceptibility to control involves the degree to which an individual allows others to pressurise or control their actions. Being susceptible to the control of others involves responding to external or internal pressures for acting. Individuals with low dispositional autonomy are likely to assume they have limited or no choice, based on actual or perceived pressure from others. Individuals with high dispositional autonomy are not subject to external or introjected control.

3.4.4 Autonomy Motivation Competence and Control

There is agreement among these perspectives that autonomy is necessary to motivation and competence, and that control is significant to an individual's degree of autonomy. The role of autonomy in fostering intrinsic motivation exemplifies that autonomy is natural to the individual. The locus of control further explains this. An internal locus of control allies with the individual's natural tendency, however an external locus of control, explains a shift of autonomy from the individual to an external source, as in Ryan and Deci's (2000) and Fazey and Fazey's (2001) extrinsic motivation as well as Weinstein et al's. (2012) susceptibility to control.

The relation between autonomy, motivation, competence, and control lends credence to the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy proposed in this study. Several studies affirm the importance of motivation for learning. Furthermore, a key purpose of learning is to increase competence. The necessity of autonomy being a significant link between motivation and competence illustrates its pedagogic potential, this potential is what the ALC proposed in this study is designed to engage, Learner's motivation and competence are engaged through the subcomponents of methods of instruction for internal conditions, designed in the ALC (See Table 4.1).

Furthermore, the relation between the four areas provides affirmation that control, which may be externally or internally executed by others, in the case of introjected regulation (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Fazey and Fazey, 2001; Weinstein et. al, 2012), strengthens arguments for a recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Where tutors recognise the significance of learner's own internal control for motivation and therefore increased competence, as well as the significance of learners retaining such control, they recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Conversely, a lack of recognition of the significance of the locus of control, could create barriers to learner autonomy and therefore competence.

This section on how students respond, identifies the importance of recognising internal and external conditions when considering learner autonomy. Relational autonomy

identifies the intrinsic nature of autonomy and the necessity for it to be mediated externally through engagement with others. The psychological perspectives identify important internal conditions of authorship, internal motivation, competence, and intrinsic control for individual autonomy. These internal conditions are summarised as initiative, proactivity, and independence in this study, and are argued as constituent of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. This perspective also identifies the potential external conditions have, to undermine individual autonomy. These include extrinsic motivation, introjected regulation, and external control.

Dewey (1916/1941) a key proponent of the role of thinking in teaching and learning expounds on thinking through his theory of experiential learning. Thinking is a necessary cognitive process indicative of freedom, whereby the learner is able to make sense of social guidance and act on own choices rather than be controlled by 'authoritative dictation' (Dewey, 1916/1941:352). Freedom in learning

> …means essentially the part played by thinking- which is personal…it means intellectual initiative, independence in observation, judicious invention, foresight of consequences and ingenuity of adaptation to them (Ibid).

Thinking in this respect is not limited to an internal process, but the combination of the internal process of an experience of cognition and external action. The combination of thought and action taking place is not in isolation but through social interaction, '…certain capacities of an individual are not brought out except under the stimulus of associating with others' (Ibid, p353). Thus, a learner's individuality is not a spatial matter of physical location, but of cognitive, mental, or psychological freedom. Thinking is like digestion it is impossible to do it for anyone other than oneself (Ibid). Where variation in thought and ideas of learners are suppressed for example through didactic principles of teaching, originality is lost, as well as the quality of their cognitive development -which is fostered by thought- (Ibid). Thinking and critical reflection are necessary to the relationship between external and internal conditions which mitigate learner autonomy.

These perspectives identify characteristics of what tutors need to consider to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. There are several existing constructs relating

to, or aiming at, engaging learner autonomy. Many of these constructs are unsuitable for engaging learner autonomy in teaching and learning in general, i.e., for learning environments where tutors and students engage regularly. The extent to which these constructs support tutors, in carrying out actions necessary to develop students as autonomous learners, identifies them as autonomy in learning constructs as defined within this study. Thirteen exemplars are outlined below.

3.5 The Pedagogic Potential of Learner Autonomy

Drawing together what teachers do and how students respond highlights the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. The importance of where the control lies is key to understanding this potential. In teaching and learning, control is realised through three interdependent dimensions: 'learning management, learning content and the learner's cognitive processes' (Benson, 2013, pg. 58). The first two dimensions of control, learning management and learning content, are indicative of external conditions of learning. The tutor has a measure of control within which decisions can be made to facilitate student led activity, reduce evaluative pressure through course design and encourage active learning. For learners to be autonomous, they need to have some control of these external conditions of learning (Benson, 2013). The third dimension of control, cognitive processes, comes under the jurisdiction of the learner. They involve the learner's internal intellectual conditions for learning which is subject to the learner's competence as discussed with CET and Fazey and Fazey (2001).

A learner's competence involves their capacity to learn which as discussed with CET is significant to their level of autonomy. A learner's capacity for autonomy shows in the psychological relation between a learner and the process and content of learning (Little, 1991) i.e., it is mediated by the internal conditions of the learner and the external conditions provided within the learning environment. Little (1991) and Candy (1991) further advocate a learner's capacity for autonomy through the principles of learner empowerment and learner reflection. According to Little (1991, p.4), the capacity for a learner's autonomy is demonstrated through 'detachment, critical reflection, decision-

making and independent action'. The first principle, learner empowerment involves a learner being able to exercise a level of independence through detachment. The learner is empowered through a reliance on their own cognitive processes rather than those of the tutor. Decision-making and independent action also indicate the learners' capacity for detachment or self-management (Candy, 1991). This means that the learner is willing, as well as capable of managing their own learning. Capacity for learner autonomy includes learner reflection (Little, 1991; Little 2007). This is the learner's capacity for reflection demonstrated in thinking and critical reflection. These skills involve being able to self-assess and identify strengths and limitations and use this to inform learning. These concepts (figure 3.1) provide a frame within which the engagement of WP learners is understood.

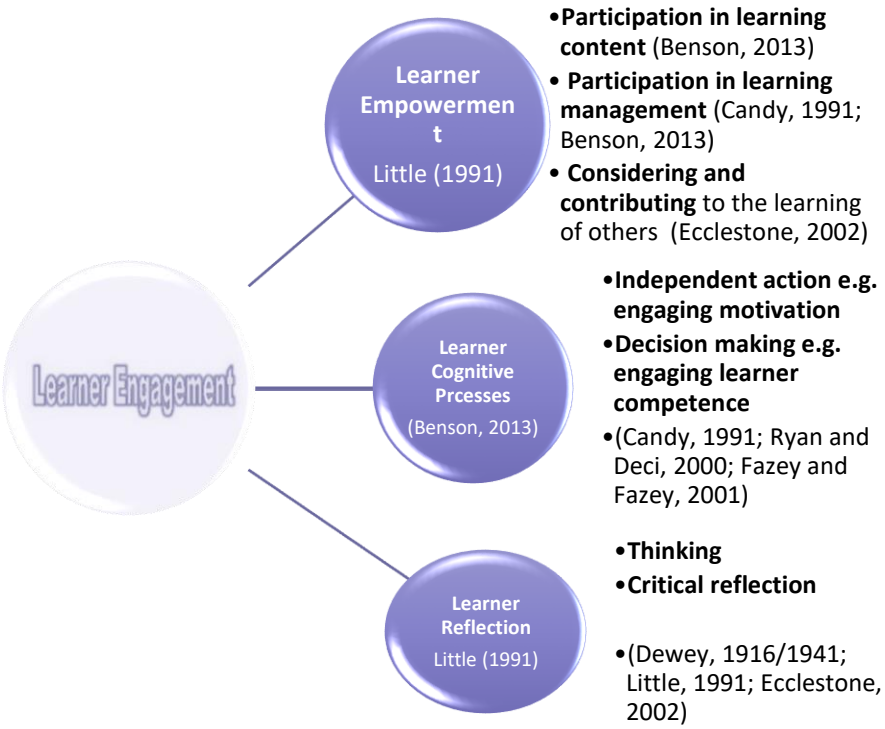

Figure 3.1 Links – Widening Participation Learner Engagement and the ALC

As with learner empowerment, learner reflection is a continuous process, engaging learners through negotiation and mediation with the tutor, developing from the shared responsibility of collaboration. Some approaches that promote student engagement and employability include (Thomas and Jones, 2007):

- Authentic tasks in real life situations
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Opportunities for metacognition i.e., reflection and self-regulation

Section 2.4.3 discusses the HEI's 'Partners in Learning' programme which provides learner engagement through collaboration in learning and teaching. The ALC designed in this study supports tutors of WP learners in partnering with their students, using learner engagement strategies, identified in its tutor subcomponents (see section 4.2).

3.5.1 Learner engagement employability and widening participation

Findings from literature have established associations between student centred learning, employability and widening participation (Tangney, (2012). In Chapter 2, student centered learning is identified as a part of the first pillar of the EHEA. In addition, arguments by Brandes and Ginnis (1986) which stress the necessity for learner autonomy in student engagement, provide a basis, for a reciprocal relationship between student centred approaches and learner autonomy, posited in this study (see figure 2.1). Learner autonomy is one of three constructs of student centred learning (Lee and Hannafin, 2016), this argument is not new, as links between learner engagement and autonomy supportive pedagogies have been posited (Reeve, 2006; Jang et al. 2010).

Student centred learning is an approach which facilitates the engagement of WP learners through their autonomy. This has positive implications for their employability as autonomy is one of several employability attributes, graduate employers seek (Thomas and Jones 2007). To a greater extent than traditional HE learners, WP learners need to access higher education and successfully complete their studies, due to WP learners being at a disadvantage with comparatively limited social and cultural capital needed to access and complete higher education (ibid). Employability reduces this disadvantage

> All students benefit from developing their employability - and awareness of it – throughout their learning experience. This is particularly true for those with access to less relevant social and cultural capital through family support and familiarity with graduate employers. (Ibid, p. 22)

Employability is recognised in graduate personal development. The proposed ALC is designed to engage the pedagogic potential of WP learner's autonomy through the use of student centred strategies by their tutors in their day-to-day teaching practices. This is significant for their personal development evidenced in the compilation personal development planning (PDP) necessary for ongoing students' awareness of their employability goals. Among others, PDP helps students "Become more effective, independent and confident self-directed learners…" (ibid. p. 24).

This establishes characteristics of what tutors need to consider to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. The ALC is designed to use the potential for learner autonomy that widening participation learners bring to HE to increase their chances of a successful completion of their studies.

There are several existing constructs relating to, or aiming at, engaging learner autonomy. Many of these constructs are unsuitable for engaging learner autonomy in teaching and learning in general i.e., for learning environments where tutors and students engage on a day-to day basis. The extent to which these constructs support tutors, in carrying out actions necessary to develop students as autonomous learners, identifies them as autonomy in learning constructs as defined within this study. Thirteen exemplars are outlined below.

3.6 Limitations of Learner Autonomy Constructs for Pedagogic Engagement

Yin (2009) describes a construct as a way of enabling the study of an abstract idea or concept, by providing a concrete or practical means of operationalisation. In this study, the abstract concept is the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, and the ALC is designed to provide a practical means of operationalisation within day-to-day teaching and learning in HE.

Yin's (2009) operationalisation involves identifying the parameters of an abstract concept, which form a construct which can be engaged. Parameters for the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy identified in this and the previous chapter include:

- Internal conditions which engage – Learner competence, locus of control and motivation.
- External conditions which provide the environment- Transformative tutor practices with reduced tutor control which foster deep learning.
- Learner Autonomy outcomes- The 4 types of learner autonomy.

In summary, parameters which operationalise include conditions which engage learner autonomy, tutor strategies which support and facilitate learner autonomy, and learner autonomy outcomes. The need for the ALC, stems from few existing constructs which operationalise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, within these parameters.

3.6.1 Current Constructs for Learner Autonomy

The limitations to the learner autonomy constructs/studies are discussed in relation to the extent to which they equip tutors to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. This is identified in the extent to which these approaches enable tutors facilitate actions necessary to develop students as autonomous learners, i.e., having procedures for enabling learning as well as an influence on teaching methods. Table 3.5 below outlines thirteen constructs or studies on learner autonomy, further detail on a selection of four of these constructs/studies is made based on how they operationalise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

Table 3.5 Thirteen existing constructs/models for learner autonomy

	Learner Autonomy model/scale/ Construct	**Tutor strategies to support and facilitate autonomy in learning**	**Does it state given learner autonomy outcomes?**	**Does it aim to engage or measure learner autonomy?**	**Field/Discipline**
1.	Guglielmino (1977) The Self-directed Learning Readiness Scale	No	No	Measure learner autonomy	Self-directed learning
2.	Oddi (1986) Oddi Continuing Learning Inventory	No	No	Measure Learner Autonomy	Self-directed learning
3.	Littlewood (1996) Autonomy as Communicator Learner Person	Yes, through language learning tasks provided	Yes, assumed through the different levels of proficiency	Engage learner autonomy	Language acquisition

Table 3.5 Thirteen existing constructs/models for learner autonomy cont'd

	Learner Autonomy model/scale/ Construct	**Tutor strategies to support and facilitate autonomy in learning**	**Does it state given learner autonomy outcomes?**	**Does it aim to engage or measure learner autonomy?**	**Field/Discipline**
4.	Nunan (1997) Awareness Involvement Intervention Creation Transcendence	Yes, through language learning tasks provided	Yes, assumed through the different levels of proficiency	Engage learner autonomy	Language acquisition
5.	Scharle and Szabo (2000) Raising awareness Changing attitudes Transferring roles	Yes, through language learning tasks provided	Yes, assumed through the different levels of proficiency	Engage learner autonomy	Language acquisition
6.	Fazey and Fazey (2001) Autonomy related psychological characteristics	No	No	Measure Learner Autonomy	Learner autonomy in general, psychology based
7.	Confessore and Park (2004) Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP)	No	No	Assess four areas (Desire, resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence)	Learner autonomy in general
8.	Macaro (2005) Autonomy of language competence. Autonomy of language learning competence. Autonomy of choice and action	Yes, through language learning tasks provided	Yes, through the different levels of proficiency	Engage learner autonomy	Language acquisition
9.	Macaskill and Taylor (2010) Learner Autonomy Scale	No	No	Measure Learner Autonomy	Learner autonomy in general, psychology based
10.	Dixon (2013) Student self-assessment scale	No, but the scale facilitates the dialogue between tutors and students	No	Engage learner autonomy, change from initial intention to measure	Language Acquisition
11.	Scott et al. (2015) Study using Macaskill and Taylor's (LAS, 2010)	No	Yes	Both engaging and measuring learner autonomy	Learner Autonomy in teaching Biology
12.	Murase (2015) Measuring Instrument for Language Learner Autonomy (MILLA)	No	No	Measure Learner Autonomy	Language Acquisition
13.	Lin and Reinders (2017) Development of a localised scale for Learner Autonomy	No	No	Measure Learner Autonomy	Language Acquisition

Guglielmino's (1977) Self Directed Learning Readiness Scale (currently the Learning Preference Assessment) is one of the earliest constructs related to learner autonomy. It

is a widely used Likert type, self-evaluation scale designed to measure self-direction in learning. This scale has been criticized as 'needing to be supported by additional investigation' (Long and Agyekum, 1983, pg. 78) and being 'psychometrically unsound' (Mackaskill and Taylor, 2010, pg. 10). Though Guglielmino's (1977) scale measures a similar concept rather than learner autonomy *per se*, for a significant period it was the closest construct to learner autonomy available. By gauging a learner's readiness for self-directed learning, its design focuses on learners attaining autonomy in learning. It does not consider tutor strategies neither are there specific learner autonomy outcomes. It measures levels of a learner's autonomy as a prerequisite to self-directed learning.

Fazey and Fazey (2001) designed a scale to measure autonomy-related psychological characteristics, using Neeman and Harter's (1986) Self-Perception Profile for College Students and Vallerand et al's. (1992) Academic Motivation Scale. Student internal conditions for learning such as scholastic competence, perceived intellectual ability and global self-worth, as well as motivation for study in HE were measured. Fazey and Fazey's (2001) scale is not as much of a construct, as a study employing two standardized scales. The scale operationalises learner autonomy as a concept that can be measured through related psychological characteristics at specific points in time.

The scale focusses on attaining goals for learner autonomy, through attention to internal and external conditions for learner autonomy, it also investigates changes to learner autonomy through their beliefs and values. However, it does not operationalise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy through tutor strategies or specific learner autonomy outcomes on a day-to-day practical basis.

Dixon (2013) carried out a study on learner autonomy in language learning. This study initially intended to design a quantitative measure by which learner autonomy could be tested. It concluded that learner autonomy is abstract and required a context to be substantiated. Furthermore, the study considered that a purely quantitative approach was impossible, as quantitative research protocols required a universal standard for learner autonomy against which individual autonomy could be measured. Dixon found

that such a universal standard for learner autonomy was impossible to produce. The study changed mid-course from a quantitative to a mixed methodology. The outcome of the research was a 256-item student self-assessment scale, covering specific areas of English language development as well as attitudinal aspects such as control, responsibility, and confidence.

The study proposed that the scale

> Can serve a useful purpose in scaffolding the learners in their environment in order to facilitate the dialogue which enables a teacher to support the learners better in the development and maintenance of their autonomous learning. (Dixon, 2013, p. IX)

The self-assessment scale enables students to identify specific autonomy-related areas for further support. It does not specify methods for engaging learner autonomy, but it does facilitate tutor action by complementing teacher estimates of learner autonomy. It shifted from its initial intention of measuring, to engaging learner autonomy. However, being designed with a sole focus on students' learning, Dixon's (2013) construct does not provide tutors with strategies to contribute to engaging learner autonomy through their teaching practices.

Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) Autonomous Learning scale (ALS) operationalises learner autonomy solely on the basis of the learner's internal conditions. They assert that a "…psychological conceptualization is essential and sufficient…" (p.3), to explain autonomous learning. In line with this view, Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) ALS is a psychometric measure which does not consider a pedagogic potential to learner autonomy or the implications of external conditions such as tutor practices, for learner autonomy. The ALS was used as a measuring instrument in Macaskill and Denovan's (2013) study on the role of positive psychology in enhancing autonomous learning. Here the operationalisation of learner autonomy as exclusively internal is explicit

> … there is less research focusing on the personal qualities of university students which facilitate or impede their development as autonomous learners. We argue that autonomy in learning is not so much about methods of learning but about

> developing capabilities in students to enable them to become autonomous learners (p.4).

Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) ALS is not designed to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy or to view a learner's autonomy from tutor practices. It is a self-assessment tool for measuring the development of learner autonomy. This restriction to internal conditions only, is further exemplified in Scott et al's. (2015) study on learner autonomy which used Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) ALS, discussed next.

Scott et al. (2015) carried out a study designed to tailor pedagogic approaches by tutors for appropriate expectations of learner autonomy; develop an ability to assess the level to which a learner is autonomous and measure the development of autonomous learning. They explored these foci through a mixed methods case study on teacher and student perceptions of the development of learner autonomy.

The study found that there were differences in levels of learner autonomy within the same cohort and that learner autonomy develops through the course of study. There was an incongruence in their findings as to whether mature learners where more autonomous as learners than traditional HE learners.

The use of a construct in Scott et al's. (2015) case study is significant for this study, as it underlines a need for the proposed ALC. Their study intended to find a means of measuring learner autonomy, also for identifying types of learner autonomy within their research aims but the ensuing study did not address these intentions. This supports a weakness in a 'measurement' approach as found in Dixon's study.

In addition, their use of Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) autonomous learning scale (ALS) limited evaluation of student autonomy to student self-assessment. Participating tutors had no uniform means of describing learner autonomy and relied solely on their recollections during interview. This could have led to the incongruence between their findings from tutor interviews on the learner autonomy of mature students, and the self-assessment of mature students using Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) ALS. Scott et al.

(2015, p. 954) concluded that "the development of empirical approaches to assess student learning autonomy, utilizing external observations or measures of student learning is a worthwhile goal", and that "An awareness of the level of learning autonomy of their students at all stages of the learning journey will enable teachers to tailor their pedagogic approach and their expectations of their students appropriately" (2015, p.946). The ALC designed within this study provides a means meet both of these goals, and in this way builds on the limitations of Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) ALS which solely addresses the internal conditions of the learner autonomy. The ALC degrees of learner autonomy provide a means of external observation and an awareness of different levels of learner autonomy, drawing tutor attention to varying levels of learner autonomy. Furthermore, the ALC tutor strategies enable tutors tailor their pedagogic approaches to specific degrees of learner autonomy.

Scott et al's. (2015) study did not have a designed construct, neither did it involve tutor strategies. It engaged learner autonomy goals in examining the development of learner autonomy over a period, it appears the study looked to a means of both fostering and measuring learner autonomy.

Examining these constructs has made it possible to ascertain the extent to which the sample of existing approaches are designed to engage learner autonomy as described within this study. Some constructs aimed at measuring rather than engaging learner autonomy. Some language learning constructs had tutor strategies as a means of engaging learner autonomy or considered the engagement of specific learner autonomy goals. None of the learning in general constructs had tutor strategies or external conditions for engaging learner autonomy, including Fazey and Fazey's (2001) scale to measure autonomy-related psychological characteristics and Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) ALS.

Although non-language learning learner autonomy constructs, neither Fazey and Fazey (2001) nor Macaskill and Taylor's (2010) constructs are designed to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy through tutor practices. They are designed to evaluate learner perceptions of their own autonomy. For this reason, the ALC is not built

on either of these constructs. Instead, the ALC is designed using Instructional Design Theory which explains the relationship between tutor practices and learner outcomes.

3.7 Conclusion

The review of literature in this chapter and the policy review in the previous, highlights the importance of providing suitable conditions, as well as of implications for understanding the role of learner autonomy in teaching and learning in HE. This role is influenced by a relationship between the external actions of a tutor and the internal responses of a learner (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999). Furthermore, it outlines the importance for tutors to have a clear understanding of what learner autonomy is, explored by RQ1. It also outlines the importance of tutors recognising a pedagogic potential to learner autonomy proposed in this study, which RQ 2 investigates, with RQ3 affirming aspects of the ALC.

Issues of identifying learner autonomy has necessitated a review of the research questions. The initial and sub RQs prior to this review and the policy chapter were:

Main question:
To what extent can the newly developed autonomy in learning construct support HE tutor practices in engaging learner autonomy?

Sub questions:
1.To what extent are tutors able to articulate their understanding of autonomous learning?
2. How competent do tutors feel about what is needed to contribute to students' autonomous learning?
3. To what extent is the student learning experience indicative of student initiative learning activities?

Having explored the theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy it is clear that articulating an understanding of learner autonomy is likely to be subject to the

challenges e.g., identified by Oxford, (2008), Everhard, (2013), and Benson, (2011) , thus a more specific focus will be how tutors see learner autonomy (RQ1). For RQ2, a basis for the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy from practice, has been established in this review of literature through an understanding of the relationship between individual autonomy and the locus of control (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Fazey and Fazey , 2001), thus tutors' recognition of this potential is more specific and identifiable than their feelings of competence in contributing to autonomous learning, leading to a revision of RQ2. A focus on how tutors plan for learner autonomy and how they evaluate student responses was the outcome of critical reflection on section 3.2- What tutors do and 3.3 how learners respond. RQ3 was revised to include both tutor action and learner responses, rather than focus on student-initiated activities only. Thus, a revision of RQ3 to tutor affirmation of aspects of the ALC, addresses both tutors' views on what tutors do and how tutors may evaluate learners responses.

Furthermore, this study inducts the ALC investigated by RQ3 which includes tutor strategies influenced by among others, Dewey (1916/1941), Little (1991,1995, 2007), and Ecclestone (2002) as well as the four types of autonomy (Table 3.1) discussed in this review of literature. The four types could be described as stages or outcomes on a learner's journey to full autonomy, including, in no specific order: heteronomous, heteronomous independent, autonomous, and autonomous dependent. Thus the overall research question was modified to:

> How feasible is the newly designed autonomy in learning construct (ALC) in supporting HE tutor practices to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

The next chapter discusses the methodological framework for this study including the design of the ALC and its empirical research. It explains the design of the ALC based on suitable conditions for learner autonomy as discussed above i.e., what tutors do- external conditions, and how tutors may evaluate learners' responses- internal conditions.

Chapter Four- Construct and Research Design

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter established the importance of tutor practices and learner responses. This necessitates considering internal and external conditions when investigating learner autonomy. This chapter discusses how an affirmative postmodernist pragmatist approach, is suitable for the design and empirical research of the feasibility of the ALC. The study aims to explain how HE tutors may provide suitable conditions for learner autonomy, and explore what can be used i.e., the ALC. This chapter explains and justifies an affirmative postmodernist pragmatism through a methodological framework, involving two design processes - 1) the conceptual design of the ALC and 2) the methodological design of the empirical research, investigating the feasibility of the ALC.

As concluded in the previous two chapters, from an HE policy point of view, there is an expected inverse relationship between levels of tutor supervision and outcomes of learner autonomy- Dublin Descriptors (Joint Quality Initiative, 2004) and EQF LLL (Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008); as students attain higher HE levels, they are expected to develop greater degrees of autonomy. From the review of literature, the locus of control within the tutor student relationship identifies the extent to which the learner is autonomous (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Fazey and Fazey, 2001). This study argues that these conclusions necessitate a means by which tutors recognise and engage learner autonomy in their teaching practices. For this reason, a case study approach has been adopted. Case studies investigate real life phenomena and deal with, among other things, '… the tracing of operational processes over time…'(Yin, 2018, pg. 10), they address explanatory question of 'how?' and exploratory question of 'what?' in research (ibid, 2018) This is a case study, as it explains how learner autonomy may be operationalised as important, structured and instrumentalised by tutors within module delivery, and explores what can be used to achieve this operationalisation i.e., the ALC.

Thus, the main research question for this study asks:

> How feasible is the newly designed autonomy in learning construct (ALC) in supporting HE tutor practices to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

Supported by three sub-questions:

> **RQ 1**: How do tutors see learner autonomy?
>
> **RQ 2:** To what extent do tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in teaching and learning?
>
> **RQ 3:** What aspects of the ALC are likely to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

Among other key issues, it has been established in Chapter Three that learner autonomy is theoretically heterogenous, i.e., it has a 'pluralistic ontology'. A pluralistic ontology describes multiple spheres of reality involving at least three principles; individual, environmental (or contextual) and social (Soli and Da Silva, 2012). The significance of considering the individual i.e., the learner, the teaching environment, and social interaction with others, in understanding learner autonomy has also been established in the previous chapter, summarised as:

1) Learner autonomy has a pedagogic potential (individual).
2) Which may be fostered or undermined by tutor methods of instruction (Contextual).

3) Learner autonomy is individual as well as social, being mediated by internal and external conditions (Individual, contextual and social).

Thus, the pluralistic ontology of learner autonomy, i.e., being individual, yet social and contextually mediated, provides an explanation for its subjection to diverse definitions and perspectives, i.e., its theoretical heterogeneity. Furthermore, a research methodology which recognises multiple realities, rather than a traditional, modernist research approach is required.

Postmodernism argues that there are multiple representations of reality (Rosenau, 1992). A pluralistic ontology, in this instance learner autonomy, warrants a postmodernist approach to its research (Curtis, 2004; O'Leary, 2018), as postmodernism recognises diverse perspectives of a single construct. This study adopts an affirmative postmodernism. Affirmative postmodernism is pragmatic and eclectic, drawing on aspects of modernist and relativist methods in research (Rosenau, 1992), also, recognising the contextual and constructive nature of reality (Rosenau, 1992) necessary for investigating a construct such as learner autonomy (Curtis, 2004; O'Leary, 2018).

This study's affirmative postmodernist approach allies with a pragmatic epistemology and recognises the pluralist ontology of learner autonomy. A pragmatic epistemology (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) recognises knowledge developed from practical experience. RQ1 explores tutors' views of learner autonomy based on their experiences. RQ 2 investigates tutors' recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy from their teaching practices and investigates practical strategies tutors use to engage learner autonomy. RQ3 involves a practical use of the ALC within real situations of teaching and learning. Thus, the empirical research designed in this chapter is pragmatic, as it explores the feasibility of the ALC through responses to questions about tutors' experiential views and practices.

A pragmatic, affirmative postmodernist approach is insufficient without a means by which the limitations of engaging multiple approaches may be mitigated (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011). For this reason, this study's pragmatic epistemology employs a critically flexible eclecticism. Critical flexibility allows for an eclectic approach which questions the authority of historical, as well as prescribed design practices alongside the researcher/designer's own personal preconceptions (Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011). This methodology is critically flexible as it draws on the pedagogic and psychological perspectives discussed, as well as Instructional Design Theory and A Framework for an Integrated Methodology. Affirmative post modernism, pragmatism and critical flexibility cohere to provide a theoretical and methodological framework illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

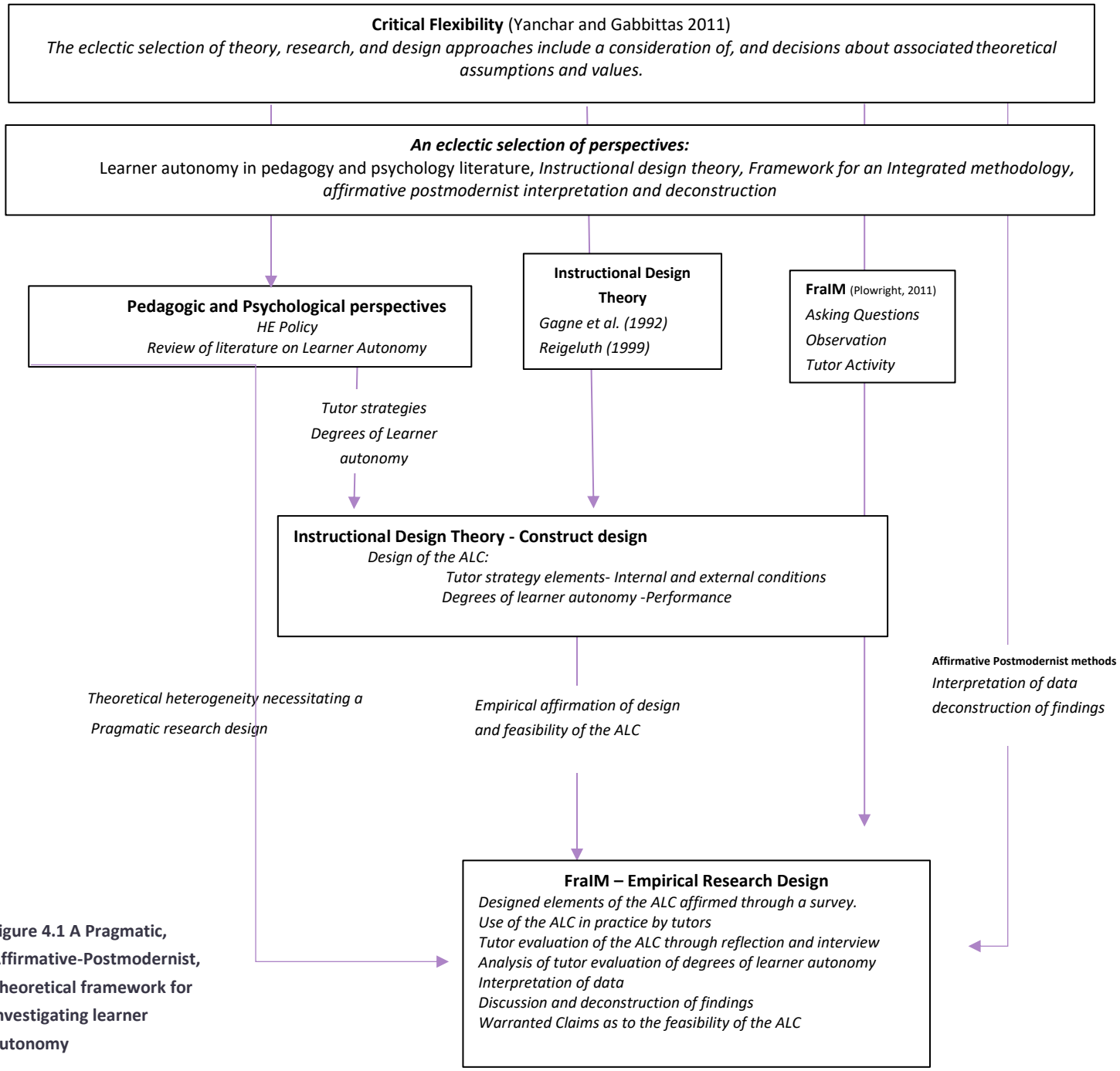

Figure 4.1 A Pragmatic, Affirmative-Postmodernist, Theoretical framework for investigating learner autonomy

The discussion for the methodology for this study is organised in three sections – 1) an explanation of an affirmative postmodernist pragmatic epistemology, 2) construct design and 3) empirical research design. Section one clarifies how affirmative postmodernism provides a pragmatic methodological framework for this study, employing critical flexibility. Sections two and three respectively explain, an affirmative

postmodernist, pragmatic approach to construct design using Instructional Design Theory, and to empirical research design through the framework for an integrated methodology (FraIM)- a mixed methods research strategy.

4.2 Affirmative Postmodernist Pragmatism and Critical flexibility

This study is about establishing a means by which tutors recognise and engage learner autonomy in their teaching practices. So far, it has been identified that learner autonomy is assumed rather than explicitly stated in HE policy. Affirmative postmodernism addresses what is important but inexplicit or marginalised. It aims at revising positivist research assumptions, values, and methods, for an equitable fit to the research purposes of disciplines outside the traditional sciences (Rosenau, 1992; O'Leary, 2018). This study is also about tutors considering the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. The review of literature has clarified that where tutors adopt teaching practices which encourage surface learning (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999), a banking model of education (Freire, 1986), or transmission style of teaching (Ecclestone, 2002), the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy is marginalised, as these teaching approaches retain the locus of control with the tutor, with implications for heteronomous rather than autonomous responses from the learners. Affirmative postmodernism challenges hegemonic assumptions that privilege certain groups/practices over others, aiming for a fair representation of realities that tend to be present but ignored or unseen, it considers everyday normal experience to be as significant as complex research (Huyssen, 1987). In research, affirmative postmodern values expose and reject research assumptions that prioritise and privilege one set of research approaches over another, and pragmatism provides a practical means by which these values are realised.

Therefore, this is an affirmative postmodernist study, as it exposes hidden and taken for granted assumptions. It achieves this by highlighting the unseen place of learner autonomy in UK HE policy, which could result in the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, being unrecognised by tutors. In addition, by challenging privileging, affirmative postmodernism aims for equality and fairness where there is unjustified

hierarchy and inequity. For this reason, critical decisions in the use of approaches selected for construct design of the ALC, and research design for the exploration of its feasibility, are such that identify and challenge inequity or hegemonic assumptions and guide eclectic choices.

Pragmatism challenges taken for granted expectations of research practice which tend to prioritise research practices over the nature of what is being researched. For example, on the one hand, Positivist/Post-positivist (modernist) researchers assume that what can be known about a concept, can only be established by measurement using a tried, tested, and agreed means, irrespective of whether the concept in view is measurable (Hammersley, 1993). Furthermore, Positivist/Post-positivist research practices, aim to establish a single perspective on reality (Twinning et al., 2017). On the other hand, purist qualitative approaches reject numeric methods of data collection (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). A rejection of numeric data is problematic for this study, as RQs 1-3 require methods that generate both qualitative and quantitative data. Pragmatism employs methods from both approaches (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Thus, pragmatism is in line with this study's affirmative postmodernist approach.

This study draws on the classical pragmatist ideas of Dewey also known as instrumentalism (Dewey (1916/1941). Four key areas signify the importance of pragmatism- development, experience, change and consequences.

4.2.1 Development

Development provides a basis for understanding that learner autonomy is a continuously developing state of being. Learners may be autonomous in certain tasks and less so in others. Dewey's instrumentalist pragmatism holds that development is continual, we are participants in an unfinished universe which is continually under construction. We are not spectators waiting passively for the emergence of an ultimate reality (Garrison, 1994). A single definite goal of complete learner autonomy in all areas is unlikely, unrealistic, and assumes an ideal of human perfection. The development of learner autonomy is continual through individual, social, and contextualised engagement, rather than unfolding towards a latent innate state of autonomous perfection. The language descriptions of learner autonomy designed in the tutor's

learner-evaluative part of the ALC, are of varying degrees of learner autonomy, indicative of continuous development in relation to differing tasks.

4.2.2 Experience

The participant's experience is necessary to this research as the ALC is designed to support tutors in fostering a learner's autonomy in their day to day practices. Theory and practice combine in ways that make sense to the user's experience (Chambers, 1983). Terms or concepts are used and function within the practical day-to-day experience, they do not represent states of the world (Mitchell, 2017). RQs 2 and 3 for example, involve tutors using the ALC over a five-week period, necessitating practical experience, ultimately for tutors on the programme to use the ALC in their normal day-to day teaching practices.

4.2.3 Change

RQ2 investigates tutor recognition of the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, argued as a means by which a student becomes autonomous in learning 1) activated by exposure to interactions, taking place within a context marked by tutor use of autonomy support strategies, and 2) demonstrated in the differing degrees of learner autonomy, which develop progressively over time in the direction of full autonomy in specific areas. Action is an instrumental means of ontological change (Sleeper, 2001). The ontological change intended here is for learners' autonomy to be recognised by tutors as having a pedagogic potential. The action of designing and using the tutor teaching method aspect of the ALC, provides a means of achieving this. The action of designing and using the tutor learner autonomy evaluative aspect of the ALC, provides a homogenous and cohered ontology of learner autonomy. Overall, the ALC is an instrumental means for a changed ontology of learner autonomy.

4.2.4 Meaning and Consequences

Within this study, language through communication and discourse are means of data gathering, chiefly through asking questions. Meaning is found in language which identifies what is in existence and precedes inquiry into the essence of things (Garrison, 2009). The pragmatic instrumentalist assumption is that language provides evidence of existence, which is then followed up by inquiry. By using survey, observations and interview, language is used in a targeted way to confirm elements of the ALC, clarify tutors' experiences of using the ALC, as well as explore tutors' own strategies for engaging learner autonomy. Furthermore, interpretation and deconstruction, the two main affirmative postmodernist methods (Rosenau, 1992) draw findings from data through meaning.

Pragmatism provides a theoretical basis for mixed methods (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Mixed methods require eclecticism. It is impossible to select varying methods without being eclectic. Eclecticism is a common denominator for affirmative postmodernism (Rosenau, 1992), and pragmatism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). However, there are issues of incoherence and incompatibility which present a critical limitation to eclecticism (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Brannen, 2005; Yanchar and Williams, 2006). These issues are addressed through critical flexibility (Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011).

4.2.5. Critical Flexibility

Common practices of eclectic research/design involve making selections of the applicable features of a theory, without a consideration of their underlying assumptions or of the whole theory. These limitations have the potential to undermine the outcomes of research or instruction, with risks of incoherence or incompatibility.

Critical Flexibility is a development of eclecticism (Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011), which drives the designer to be reflexive by reassessing what they need to do considering their own values assumption and preferences. In addition, it allows for an eclectic approach

which questions the values and assumptions underlying selected theories. Eclecticism allows for a broad theoretical orientation to investigation (Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011), necessary for the study of a theoretically heterogenous subject such as learner autonomy, moreover, an affirmative postmodernist approach is inevitably eclectic (Rosenau, 1992). Critical flexibility provides a broad methodological overview, necessary to research the complexity of human subjects, which requires a broader orientation than a single theoretical position can provide e.g., the pluralistic ontology of learner autonomy. Education needs research practices that select 'from a rich blend of theoretical possibilities, [one] is able to access the professional community's experiences of what has been beneficial to the learner…' (Geelan 2006, p.28).

Strengths of an eclectic approach lie in the availability of choice of the most appropriate theories or aspects, to build a framework for educational research or instructional design (Garfield and Kurtz, 1977). Limitations on the other hand, involve a neglect of the foundational elements on which these theories are based (Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011), as eclecticism assumes that underlying values and assumptions of theory are separate from its applicable features.

Critical flexibility in educational research or instructional design (Yanchar and Gabbittas, 2011) provides a type of eclecticism that recognises the importance of analysing the underlying theoretical assumptions and values, alongside the explicit explanations and procedures, when making eclectic selections. Critical flexibility minimises the potential for theoretical incoherence and incompatibility as it requires that the purposes of eclectic choices are clarified, that implicit foundational assumptions of a theory or approach are identified when making eclectic selections, also, that the educational researcher/designer is reflexive in making choices, engaging their 'conceptual design sense' (p. 388) by explicating own values, assumptions and beliefs about learning.

Critical flexibility oversees the design of the two aspects to this study through 1) construct design i.e., conceptual design of the ALC, and the design of the empirical research. Each of these will now be considered.

4.3 Construct Design

This study has established in the previous chapter, four characteristics of learner autonomy; its proposed pedagogic potential, its relationship with tutor methods of instruction, its being an individual as well as social concept and its being mediated by internal and external conditions. These characteristics are necessary student-centred areas for engaging learner autonomy (O'Leary, 2018). Instructional design theory provides a space within which these ideas about the ALC can be drawn together, as it places the learner at the top of the learning organisational learning chart (Reigeluth, 1999).

4.3.1 Steps in Construct Design

Four steps have been logically devised in this study to design this construct.

1. Identify the relevant theory/ies on which the construct will be designed.
2. Explore the underlying assumptions to theory and outline relevance to the construct to be designed.
3. Select the aspects and assumptions of the theory to be used in design.
4. Create the construct.

These steps have been logically devised within this study as a reasonable way to design an abstract construct such as the ALC.

Step 1 – Identifying relevant theory

Instructional design theory (IDT) provides guidance on how to improve learning (Reigeluth, 1999). There are several examples of IDTs, centred on how the curriculum is delivered through instruction. Gagne's IDT is sole of these approaches which considers the design of a non-curricular aspect of instruction, described as attitudes (Gagne et. al, 1992).

Attitudes address learner autonomy as explained further, below. Gagne's view of instruction includes learner autonomy

> " Why do we speak of instruction rather than teaching? It is because we wish to describe all of the events that may have a direct effect on the learning of a human being, not just those set in motion by an individual who is a teacher. (p. 3)

Gagne's Instructional Design Theory

Two areas of Gagne et al's. (1992) principles of IDT - its assumptions and its categories of learning capabilities, are selected for relevance to the ALC. Four of five assumptions (see Step 2 below) guide the design and use of the ALC, and one capability, the last of a hierarchy of five categories of learning capabilities (Appendix 7), applies to learner autonomy. Gagne's IDT is selected for design of the ALC, however critical flexibility reveals limitations in relation to some of its features and its positivist foundations.

Gagne et al's. (1992) five categories of learned capabilities are a taxonomy of skills and strategies retained by the learner and necessary for the acquisition of new knowledge. These are referred to as learning capabilities as they 'are memory contents that make the learner capable of performing' (pg.12) in specific ways, comprising intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, verbal information, motor skills and attitudes (Figure 4.2 below).

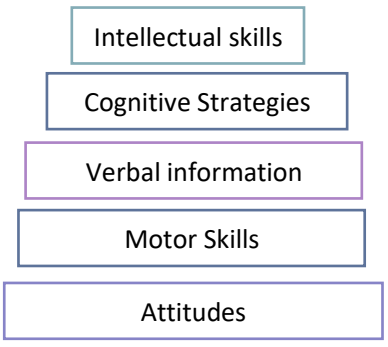

Figure 4.2 Categories of Learned Capabilities

Each category of learned capability includes a description, for example, of types in the case of intellectual skills, or strategies in the case of cognitive strategies. The

descriptions of each of the five capabilities differ, however three areas consistent across all capabilities are 'performance' which outlines expectations for the performance of an aspect of the capability in question, 'internal conditions' outlining expectations of the internal conditions of the learner to enable the required performance, as well as 'external conditions' which outline expectations of the external conditions of the learner to enable the required performance. Gagne et al. (1992) recognise that several of these capabilities work together and instruction cannot be based on a single capability, for example attitudes 'require a substrate of information and intellectual skills to support them' (pg. 13). Gagne et al. (*Ibid*) also note that attitudes are a different kind of learning outcome to other categories and require methods that differ from capabilities higher up the taxonomy.

Figure 4.3 below illustrates performance, internal and external conditions for attitudes.

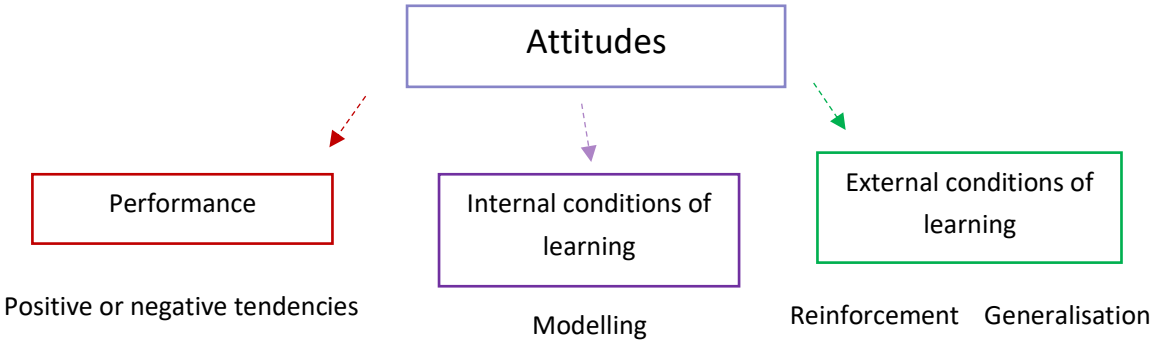

Figure 4.3 Methods of instruction for learning attitudes Gagne et al. (1992)

Issues of incompatibility

The attitudes category of learning capabilities provides a design base for engaging learner autonomy, as learner autonomy is social and behavioural (not curricular). The attitudes category addresses a necessity for internal and external conditions, which have been identified in the previous chapter, as important to learner autonomy. Fig 4.3 above outlines guidance for attitudes through expectations of performance, internal and

external conditions. Critical flexibility exposes foundational values of Gagne et al's. (*Ibid*) IDT for attitudes, identifying that proposed methods of instruction here are incompatible to learner autonomy which has a pluralistic ontology. Thus, attitudes as a capability category needs further attention to constitute a design aspect for the ALC.

Attitudes- methodological incompatibilities exposed by critical flexibility

The problem with indicators of performance, as well as internal and external conditions for fostering attitudes, proposed by Gagne et al. (1992) is that 1) they are bound to a behaviourist perspective of how teaching and learning should take place, thus are deterministic. 2) They assume the nature of social relations between tutors and students, i.e., students want to model on their tutors. 3) They are based on behaviourist assumptions and methods; where learners passively respond rather than actively engage. 4) They imply a single reality of what learner attitudes should be. This runs counter to current conclusions of a pluralistic ontology, necessary for learner autonomy which recognise multiple degrees rather than a single outcome.

Therefore, Gagne et al's. IDT (1992) on the one hand, provides design considerations for ALC by establishing the importance of instruction for fostering a social behavioural concept. It also establishes the importance of considering indicators of performance with internal and external conditions. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 of the previous chapter concludes that what the teacher does (external conditions) and how the learner responds (internal conditions) is crucial to the development of learner autonomy, dependent on the locus of control. The problem is that methods of instruction necessary for internal and external conditions, as well as performance, should be compatible with the nature of learner autonomy as established in Chapter Three, i.e., non-deterministic. Thus, indicators of performance and suitable internal and external conditions for engaging learner autonomy, can be framed within Reigeluth's (1999) IDT which aims for a probabilistic rather than deterministic relationship.

Reigeluth's Instructional Design Theory

Reigeluth's (1999) broad approach to teaching methods, addresses the problem of determinism presented by Gagne et al's. (1992) performance indicators, as well as their internal and external conditions for fostering attitudes. Here, the construct designer considers what the internal and external conditions should be. For the ALC, internal conditions include opportunities for motivation, competence, and an internal locus of control as discussed in section 3.3, through tutor strategies of thinking, critical reflection, decision making. External conditions involve, independent action, shared responsibility with others, and recognition of the role of others as discussed in section 3.2. and concluded at the end of Chapter Three. These conditions harness the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, as they allow for a movement of the locus of control, from the tutor to the learner.

Four aspects of Reigeluth's (1999) IDT include 1) a design orientation, 2) of teaching methods, 3) which may be further divided into subcomponents, and 4) which are probabilistic. A design orientation means that an IDT produces a designed object, the designed object proposes teaching methods which are means of supporting and facilitating learning. Teaching methods also include advice on when and when not to use the proposed teaching methods (Bostwick et al., 2014; Reigeluth, 1999). Proposed teaching methods can be further divided into smaller steps (subcomponents) which provide clearer guidance to tutors. Lastly, the proposed teaching methods are probabilistic. This means they serve to increase the possibility of the tutor achieving their teaching goals, rather than determine outcomes (Reigeluth, 1999).

STEP 2- EXPLORE UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS AND OUTLINE RELEVANCE

The four of Gagne et al's. (1992) five assumptions of instructional design are:

1) Instructional design is oriented to the individual and aids their learning.
2) It has immediate and long-range phases.
3) Systematically designed instruction can aid equitable individual development.
5) Designed instruction should be based on how human beings learn.

(1992, pgs. 4-5)

Critical flexibility reveals the incompatibility of assumption 4 with learner autonomy. Its omission has no implications for fostering a pluralist ontology such as learner autonomy.

Assumptions one, two, three and five cohere with assumptions about learner autonomy identified in the review of HE policy and literature. Firstly, IDT is oriented to how the individual learns within a social environment, as does tutor engagement of learner autonomy during instructional sessions. Secondly, IDT assumes immediate and long-term phases of learning. Likewise, the development of learner autonomy, learners becoming autonomous, involves the short-term period of the teaching and learning sessions and the long-term goal of attaining full autonomy by the end of HE. Thirdly, IDT assumes that systematically designed instruction can aid individual development. The ALC provides a systematic means of tutors delivering their teaching sessions to attain both their curricular goals and synchronously, engage learner autonomy. Lastly, IDT assumes that designed instruction should be based on how human beings learn. The teaching components of the ALC which inform strategies for tutor practices are based on how learners learn, so doing, foster their development as autonomous learners.

Therefore, these assumptions are relevant as:

1) The ALC is oriented to the individual and aids their learning (i.e., student centered).
2) It has immediate and long-term goals for engaging learner autonomy.
3) It allows for equitable access to educational opportunities for all learners, avoiding privileging one type or ability of learner above the other, the tutor above the learners or vice versa.
4) Tutor methods, subcomponents and tutor evaluation of learner autonomy are based on how human beings learn.

STEP 3- SELECTING ASPECTS INVOLVED IN THE DESIGN

A critically flexible, eclectic selection from Gagne et al. (1992) and Reigeluth (1999) IDT in designing the ALC, involves a construct for engaging learner autonomy which:

a. Proposes teaching methods which are a means of facilitating learner autonomy outcomes alongside curricular objectives (Gagne et al., Attitudes).
b. The teaching methods address internal and external contexts for learning with statements of performance (Gagne et al., Attitudes).
c. Non-prescriptive teaching methods are further divided into smaller steps (sub-components) which provide clearer guidance to tutors (Reigeluth).
d. Proposed teaching methods are probabilistic, they serve to increase the possibility of the tutor achieving their teaching goals, they do not determine learner outcomes (Reigeluth).

STEP 4- CREATING THE DESIGN

The first aspect of IDT is designing the object (Reigeluth, 1999). Designed in two parts, the ALC has a tutor strategy part identifying what the tutor does, and a tutor's learner-evaluative aspect explaining how the learner responds. The tutor strategy part comprises opportunities to foster internal and external conditions, through two methods, 1) opportunities to enable conceptual skills (internal) and 2) opportunities to encourage social action (external). Conditions are teaching strategies; each approach has three subcomponents further illustrated in Table 4.1 below. Internal conditions are fostered by strategies for thinking, critical reflection and decision making. External conditions include strategies for independent action, contribution to the learning of others, and consideration of the learning of others. These strategies are drawn from the review of literature in the previous chapter. The tutor strategy part aims to increase the probability of engaging learner autonomy outcomes and uses the tutor's learner-evaluative part of the ALC to establish how learners respond to the strategies. So, 'Performance' is identified in the tutor's learner-evaluative aspect i.e., the student outcome part of the ALC, adapted from Ladenika's (2017) degrees of learner autonomy discussed in the previous chapter.

TABLE 4.1 - THE TUTOR STRATEGY PART OF THE ALC- INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

Conditions	**Method of instruction**	**Subcomponent**
Internal	Enabling Conceptual Skills	Opportunities for thinking and critical reflection
Internal	Enabling Conceptual Skills	Opportunities for decision making
External	Encouraging Social Action	Opportunities for Independent action
External	Encouraging Social Action	Opportunities for consideration of and contribution to the learning of others

Internal conditions – Opportunities for enabling conceptual skills

Conceptual skills are internal to the learner and are enabled through having opportunities to think, to critically reflect and to make decisions (Little, 1991,2007; Freire 1986; Ecclestone, 2002; Dewey 1916/1941). These skills increase the probability of learners becoming more autonomous, they motivate, and serve to locate control of pedagogic practice with the learner (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Fazey and Fazey, 2001). Thinking and critical reflection comprise critical autonomy (Ecclestone, 2002) where there is a complete shift of focus from teacher to learner. Critical autonomy is an outcome of enabling a learner's conceptual skills of critical thinking, reflection, and engagement. Dewey (1916/1941) and Little (1991, 1995) emphasise the roles of thinking and critical reflection in developing learner's autonomous engagement, through the development of initiative, independence and foresight as outcomes of thinking and critical reflection. These internal conditions require the learner's active engagement rather than a passive or instinctive response. Thus, internal conditions of conceptual skills are subdivided into subcomponents of thinking, critical reflection and decision making.

External conditions – Opportunities to engage social action

Social action is external to the learner and is enabled through opportunities for learners to make independent choices (Gagne et al., 1992), for learners to contribute to the learning of others (Dewey, 1916/1941; Nedelsky, 1989), and to make choices which consider the learning of others (Freire, 1986; Ecclestone, 2002; Nedelsky, 1989). External

conditions of social action are subdivided into independent action, contribution to the learning of others and consideration of the learning of others.

Internal and external conditions comprise the tutor part of the construct as illustrated in Figure 4.4 below:

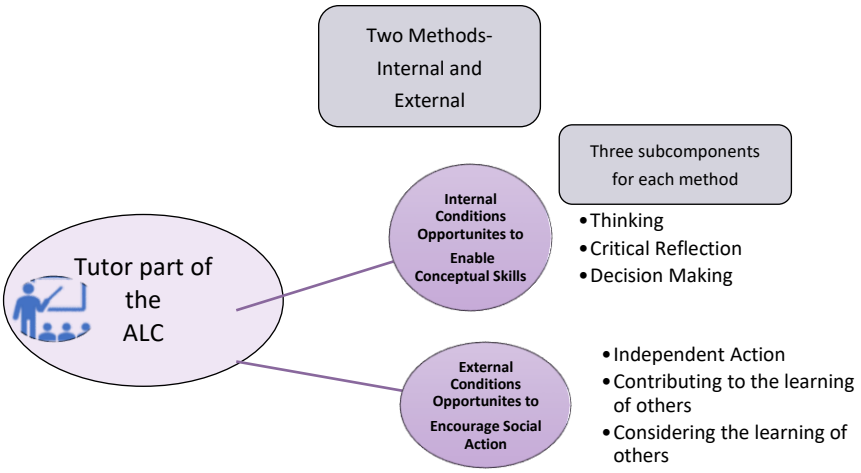

Figure 4.4- The designed object- Teaching methods and subcomponents

The Evaluative Part of the ALC - Learner autonomy performance outcomes

The learner-evaluative part of the ALC comprises four degrees of learner autonomy (Ladenika, 2017) for use by tutors, discussed in the previous chapter. This is the 'performance' space outlined by Gagne et, al's (1992) approach. Performance explains outcomes that could emerge by reason of engaging with the tutor strategies illustrated in Table 4.1 above. Performance i.e., degrees of learner autonomy, includes descriptors of Autonomous, Heteronomous, Autonomous Dependence, and Heteronomous Independence. The degrees of learner autonomy constitute the outcomes of tutor and student engagement with the two teaching methods and their six subcomponents. It is important to clarify the theoretical basis of the descriptors of the four levels of learner autonomy.

Statements of performance -Degrees of learner autonomy

The degrees of learner autonomy engaged in this study are derived from literature and practice and posited in Ladenika's (2017) argument for states of autonomy in building

resilience. The state of being autonomous or the term autonomy is well known and documented in literature. Heteronomy on the other hand is relatively unknown, as discussed in the previous chapter. A heteronomous degree of learner autonomy describes where the learner is to yet to become autonomous and is highly dependent on the tutor.

Weinstein et al. (2012) describes autonomous dependence as a state whereby autonomous individuals make themselves dependent with a view to learning new skills, strategies, or knowledge. Having attained mastery, the learner becomes autonomous as they are able engage their new learning independently.

Heteronomous Independence is a concept inducted within this study. It is a description used by Ladenika (2017) as an antonym of autonomous dependence. The heteronomous independent learner carries out tasks independently yet requires confirmation from others that they are meeting requirements, as they are yet to develop full self-regulation. The concept of heteronomous independence is syllogised from the main premise that where autonomous dependent learners (Weinstein et al., 2012) are partially autonomous and partially dependent, then heteronomous independent learners are partially heteronomous and partially independent. Figure 1.1 is repeated below. It illustrates how the learner performance part of the ALC - levels of learner autonomy, come into the designed ALC object.

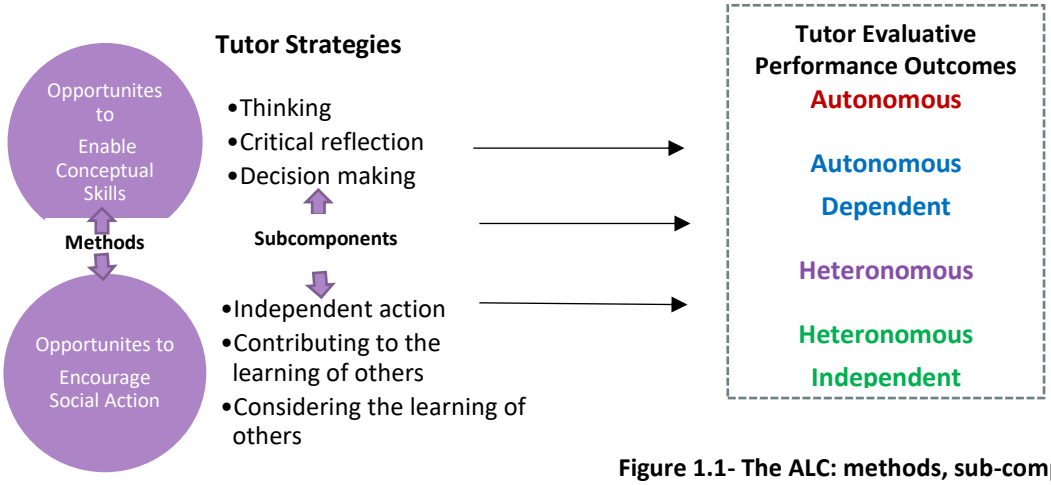

Figure 1.1- The ALC: methods, sub-components, and performance

The Autonomy in Learning Construct (ALC) has been designed using IDT principles to provide a means by which tutors may support the development of their students' autonomy alongside normal teaching practices, as well as, for them to evaluate the extent to which learners are autonomous, by observing learners' behaviours.

Several existing constructs relating to or aiming at engaging learner autonomy have been evaluated in section 3.6 of Chapter Three. Many of these constructs are not suitable for engaging learner autonomy in teaching and learning in general, i.e., for learning environments where tutors and students engage regularly for example on a day to day or weekly basis. Furthermore, what is needed is a construct which tutors may use to engage learner autonomy across disciplinary boundaries to address the problem of theoretical heterogeneity.

An examination of these constructs/studies within an affirmative postmodernist pragmatic epistemology leads to three conclusions:

1) To engage learner autonomy in teaching and learning, pedagogical rather than psychological constructs are needed as the latter tend to be designed to measure rather than engage learner autonomy e.g., Fazey and Fazey, (2001). The positivist underlying assumptions of measurement approaches are unsuited to the construct of learner autonomy (Dixon, 2013).
2) Engaging learner autonomy needs to include both tutor strategies and learner outcomes (Scott et al., 2015). The proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy resides within the learner but is actioned by tutor strategies.
3) Solely quantitative methods are ineffective in the study of learner autonomy as there is no universal standard against which learner autonomy may be mapped to ascertain measurement or calculation (Scott et al., 2015; Dixon, 2013).

This research study addresses these limitations through the design of the ALC. The next section explains the mixed methods research design for exploring the feasibility of the ALC.

4.4 Empirical Research Design

The research design for this study takes a mixed methods approach guided by a framework for an integrated methodology (FraIM) with affirmative post-modern methods. The FraIM (Plowright, 2011) is one of few relatively recent additions to the mixed methods paradigm from the field of education, a paradigm largely dominated by health disciplines (Onwuegbuzie, 2012). As its name implies, it is a framework for an integrated methodology in educational research, designed to keep the focus of research on its purposes i.e., the research questions, and its context. It challenges hegemonic research practices which subject research purposes to methodological assumptions. The FraIM structures educational research in six stages beginning with the context of research and ending with warrantable claims. It proposes six stages to carrying out pragmatic research, avoiding mandating procedures, and providing flexibility for research choices to be made in relation to the research questions, rather than research protocols.

The six stages are (Plowright, 2011):

1. Research Question
2. Data source management (cases/sampling)
3. Data collection methods
4. Data and Data Analysis
5. Claims and Evidence
6. Conclusion

The first five stages are discussed further on in this section, i.e., Research question, data source management, data collection methods, data, and claims. The last stage is the conclusion to the study – Chapter Nine.

Approaches such as the FraIM aim at avoiding problems with traditional research approaches where methods and data are classified as either 'qualitative' or 'quantitative'. It contributes to the development of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 2011) in educational research, by challenging approaches where a mixture of both types of data is in practice, a subjection of one approach to the other, usually qualitative methods to quantitative (see table 4.2 below). As Onwuegbuzie proposes, there is a need for

> …a new theoretical and methodological space in which a socially just and productive coexistence among all research traditions is promoted actively, and in which mixed research is consciously local, dynamic, interactive, situated, contingent, fluid, strategic, and generative… (2012. p. 194)

Mixed methods are advocated as a third paradigm for research in the social and behavioural sciences (Johnson and Onwegbuzie, 2004). These research designs are relevant where the traditional qualitative or quantitative approaches are insufficient 'to capture the trends and details of a situation' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009 p. 29). The methods aim to resolve issues of purism by reconciling both qualitative and quantitative methods, with a priority on the research questions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009) rather than research protocols. Reconciling both types of research methods is inevitably eclectic, which outlines a problem with combining different types of methods, i.e., the perpetuation of incompatibility. Brannen (2005), argues for a consideration of mixed methods whilst recognising that the problem of assumptions attached to types of method and data remains, even when 'mixed'. At the point of analysis and interpretation of data, Brannen (2005) concedes

> …it is at this phase that ontological, epistemological and theoretical issues rise their heads in the encounter with the data. In the cold light of analysis, we are forced to reflect on different kinds of 'truth' or 'validity' and to take account of the fact that our different types of data are constituted by the assumptions and methods that elicit them (pg. 176).

As an affirmative postmodernist approach, this study takes a fresh look at methods and data and identifies a hegemony of assumptions about a relationship between data and methods which have developed over time, but which have no real research basis. Pragmatic critical flexibility resolves these concerns, by asserting that data is formed by the method used, but received assumptions about data, due to being generated from a specific method used in one type of research, should be examined for compatibility and coherence. Assumptions may not apply when a method from one type is used in another type of research. For example, a survey

asking closed questions will produce either yes or no answers. However, the limitation from assumptions e.g., implications of 'No' responses need not apply in mixed methods, where opportunities for in-depth explanations are possible through associated narrative data. The researcher may seek to establish views on a specific reality e.g., the existence of a phenomenon hence, closed questions. This may be supplemented with linked in-depth data, where respondents give reasons for their choices through qualitative explanation. Common assumptions about numerical data need not impede this process, i.e., Yes and No responses may provide a limited view of a concept, however, where reasons for choice are requested, further depth may be found in the detail of attendant narrative data. Thus the 'truth' or 'validity' of the data as suggested by Brannen (2005) is not necessarily compromised. Assumptions are views rather than immutable truths; a pragmatic approach recognises that the shared beliefs and understandings which fuel assumptions may change. Change should be considered, and beliefs and assumptions discarded where they become irrelevant or superfluous.

Assumptions accompany all approaches to research, Greene (2008), argues that in mixed methods research, the assumptions of the researcher are that methods which will give the best outcomes to meet the intentions of the research, will be selected irrespective of the paradigm.

In this study, to limit issues of common assumptions of data and method, the familiar terms 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' are avoided as much as possible. Data is described as either narrative or numeric, and methods as integrated rather than mixed. Narrative and numeric data integrate to form an evidence base which includes different types of data i.e., numerical as well as narrative data for which statistical (non-parametric), observational, interpretative as well as logical means of analysis are used. Priority is on how the data best explains the research questions.

An integration of methods enables the best possible quality of data in addressing the research questions (Johnson and Onwuegbizie, 2004; Plowright, 2016). Data must be true to the subjects in view. As argued above, the pragmatic approach to this study

avoids expectations of a foundationalist causal relationship between the key aspects of the ALC. In other words, tutor strategies and degrees of learner autonomy cannot be reduced to dependent and independent variables. Moreover, the intention of the study is to ascertain the feasibility of the ALC doing what it is designed to do. It is not to determine that it does engage learner autonomy. For this reason, a solely numeric approach would not meet the objectives of this study. Similarly, a solely narrative approach would be limited, for example the advantage of gaining a wider perspective of feasibility using a survey providing continuous data, would be missed.

4.4.1. ISSUES WITH COMMON MIXED METHODS APPROACHES

Creswell and Creswell (2018) proffer three main approaches to mixed methods research – Convergent, Explanatory and Exploratory mixed methods design. Critical flexibility identifies limitations to these three mixed methods approaches (Table 4.2). Firstly, there is an assumption of testing or measurement, e.g., assumptions of the existence of variables, or an expectation that different types of data should behave the same way or produce the same result. For example, convergence design could require a weighting to qualitative sample size, to bring qualitative data in line with quantitative data.

Another issue is constraint which is not by reason of requirements for the research questions, but by reason of the research design expectations. The explanatory approach mandates that quantitative data is collected first and from this, a qualitative focus is derived. This could apply to this study in that a survey (quantitative approach) is carried out which confirms (or otherwise) the design aspects ALC as feasible, from tutors' professional judgment. However, the explanatory approach requires that results from the quantitative approach are used to plan the qualitative approach. This is a constraint which directs this study away from its intentions. In this study, the purposes of the survey and the tutor task (qualitative approach) are independent of each other.

Furthermore, the exploratory approach requires that through introductory qualitative research, a focus is found for a quantitative approach which scales up to a large population. For example, criteria for designing a test identified in a focus group, is developed into an instrument which may be applied to a large population. The ALC is being trialled on a single HE programme to meet the needs of a specific group. It is not relevant to large populations as it is not logical for tutors to teach large populations in an interactive seminar style format.

TABLE 4.2 THREE MAIN MIXED METHODS APPROACHES (CRESWELL AND CRESWELL, 2018 PP.217 - 226).

Mixed Methods Design	**Design Description**	**Data Collection**	**Data analysis and Integration**	**Interpretation**	**Validity**
Convergent Mixed Methods Design	Qualitative and Quantitative data gathered on the same area of focus. One type of data is used to confirm the other.	Both forms of data are collected using the same or parallel variables or concepts. Sample size of one form may be adjusted to ally with the other e.g., qualitative sample weighted to be in line with larger quantitative sample	Both types of data must be merged.	Aim for convergence of findings, Divergence is considered a limitation.	Established means of validity for each type of data is to be followed.
Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design	Quantitative procedures to be followed. Outcomes of quantitative approach determine focus and participants for qualitative phase.	Rigorous quantitative sampling followed by purposive sample for qualitative follow up.	Called "Connecting quantitative results to qualitative data collection". The point of integration is where quantitative results are used to plan qualitative follow up.	Report on quantitative results, report on qualitative results, then report on how the qualitative finding helped the quantitative results. There is no comparison between results.	Overall validity depends heavily on quantitative procedures and results.
Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design	Converse to Explanatory above, Exploratory starts with qualitative procedures. An aspect to be tested emerges which is tailored to the target population.	Analysis of initial qualitative data which produces the quantitative feature to test or explore further e.g., to develop a psychometric instrument. Exploration is scaled up to a large population.	Separate analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Integration happens when outcomes of qualitative data are used to develop quantitative research action scaled up to the population.	Qualitative themes generalised to a larger sample.	Qualitative sample will not be included in results. Established means of validity for each type of data is to be followed.

The fixed requirements of the exploratory and explanatory approaches in Table 4.2 limit the research needs, moreover, they assume a need to generalise to larger populations indicative of modernist assumptions about research. This study requires a mixed methods case study approach which will:

1) Confirm the extent to which tutors recognise the relevance of learner autonomy to HE following its hiddenness in HE policy (Survey)

2) Ascertain the ALC's feasibility to enable tutors to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in a real teaching situation, through tutor use in practice (Tutor Task and Interviews)

3) Confirm which aspects of the ALC tutors agree are feasible in engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy (Survey, Tutor Task, Interviews)

This yields three means of data collection- a survey, a practical instance of tutors using the ALC, and interview of a sample of tutors who have used the ALC in practice.

This study explores the feasibility of a learner autonomy construct (ALC), as a means of engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, to enhance student engagement during teaching and learning sessions within a specific HE environment. The exploration takes place among professional HE educators. It is necessary, that as the purpose of the ALC is professional use by tutors in their day to day practices, the exploration of its feasibility should make use of their professional judgement and knowledge (Winch et.al, 2015). In other words, it explores what will enable tutors engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in real life practices over time.

4.4.2 WHY USE THE FRAIM?

The FraIM allows the researcher to make decisions which are driven by the research. It recognises a range of research strategies including case studies. This study requires a mixed methods case study approach which is pragmatic and allows for affirmative postmodernist methods. Table 4.3 outlines how the FraIM differs from the three mixed methods approaches in table 4.2:

TABLE 4.3: THE FRAIM APPROACH TO USING MIXED METHODS

Design Description	Narrative and numeric data. Six stages from research question to conclusion, relationship between types of data develops in line with what is needed to answer the research questions in a warrantable way.
Data Collection	Data is collected in line with what is needed for the research, this may be through one or more of observation, asking questions or artefact analysis.
Data Analysis and integration	Degree of structure and degree of mediation is analysed for each data collection method. Data may be transformed or converted in line with research needs.
Interpretation	Interpretation is logically derived from the data. In this study, Affirmative postmodernist interpretation methods are used.

THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions arise from one or more of five contexts, (Clough and Nutbrown, 2010). This is a change from conventional research design where research questions are identified from gaps in literature (Plowright, 2011). Cases are the participants from whom data is gathered, identified in this study from purposive and convenience sampling discussed below. Methods are how data is collected from cases, in this instance, two methods, observation and asking questions, provided both narrative and numeric data for further analysis. Data was generated by 1) observations made by both researcher and participant tutor, of consenting students' responses to the ALC, as well as 2) questions asked of participating tutors through survey and interviews. Both numeric and narrative analysis of data provided evidence on which claims were made.

DATA SOURCE MANAGEMENT: CASE STUDY

According to the FraIM, a case study is a strategy for managing sources of data, and the research question assists with determining these sources (Plowright, 2011). Case studies involve a minimal number of participants and is at the smaller end of a continuum involving case study, experiment, and survey. There is flexibility for the researcher to determine how to design the overall strategy, for example an experiment may include a case study as a means of data collection, or as Yin (2015b/2018) explains, mixed methods can bridge methods using, parallel, sequential or nested arrangements, e.g., a survey within a case study. This research study uses case study as the main source of data management, in line with Yin (2018) on the role of case study in answering explanatory and exploratory questions of 'how' and 'what' respectively.

As a mixed methods case study, this study adopts survey, a tutor task and tutor interviews as data collection methods. Survey and tutor task form a parallel arrangement, whilst the Tutor task and tutor interviews are sequential. This parallel and sequential arrangement is deliberate, to achieve the research intentions. The purpose of the survey was, to draw on the experience of a broad group of tutors, and to explore affirmation of the elements of the ALC on a wider scale. In addition, the survey explored tutors' views of learner autonomy and their recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. This separates the survey from the tutor task which was designed to provided real life data of use of the ALC in practice. It was necessary to have the interviews sequential to the Tutor task, to achieve a low level of mediation (Plowright, 2011), i.e., a shorter time between tutor use of the ALC and gathering data on their experience. Participants were HE tutors in a school, under the faculty of Education of the HEI, and at programme level, HE tutors on a Foundation degree/BA top up programme.

Sampling

In the FraIM, cases involve the participants from which data is gathered. These are the sources of data for the study (Hammersley, 1992). Cases were selected by

sampling. Purposive and convenience samples (Plowright, 2011) were taken for data collection. The sample of tutor participants implementing the ALC were purposive. Cases were specific to the programme. These samples were purposive as the problem instigating the research, was specific to the programme the HE tutors in the sample delivered. A convenience sample was derived from school wide responses to the survey. A sample of 25 responses was received from an online survey, which had been sent to an estimated 75 tutors within the school. A double-blind sample of students, observed for degrees of learner autonomy by the tutors during the tutor task, were also selected by convenience sampling through observation (more about this sample is explained under observations below). These were students scheduled to be taught by participant tutors during the data collection period of this study.

Data integration is significant in mixed methods research for data validity (Fielding, 2012). Data integration in this study is by data conversion or data transformation discussed further under Data and Data Analyses, below. The cases and the data management sources were selected pragmatically based on what worked i.e., what the researcher had access to and participants who had consented to participate in the research study.

Data Collection Methods

The FraIM summarises data collection into three main methods- observation, asking questions and artefact analysis. For each method there is a degree of structure and a degree of mediation to address validity of data and warrantability of claims made, following analysis of data collected. Two methods used in this study are observation carried out during the Tutor Task, where observation was used for sampling as well as tutor evaluation of students' degree of autonomy; also asking questions, carried out during the survey and tutor interviews.

Observation (Data collection method)

Observation as a means of gathering data involves three dimensions:

1) The sensory source of experience
2) Types of observer participant interaction
3) The degree of structure and relevant type of data.

Observations were carried out during the tutor task aspect of the study, 1) by the researcher for sampling purposes to identify student samples for tutors to observe, and 2) by tutors when they observed the students to ascertain their degree of learner autonomy following a set task. In the first instance of observation, both tutor and student participants were aware of the research study and that the researcher was there to observe to draw up a sample for participant tutors. The purpose of the observation for sampling was to identify consenting student participants which matched each of the degrees of autonomy proposed on the ALC. By seeing and hearing the students' responses to the tutor during the sessions and reading their body language, students could be categorised under each degree of autonomy as autonomous, autonomous dependent, heteronomous or heteronomous independent. Degrees of autonomy are the tutor's learner-evaluative part of the ALC explained in the previous section on construct design.

Types of observation in this study

There are four types of observer- Full observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer and full participant (Plowright, 2011). Two types of observation involved in this research design- are observer-as-participant and full participant. In carrying out observations for sampling, the researcher took the role of observer-as-participant by making observations from a vantage point during several teaching and learning sessions. The tutors and their students were aware of the study and the reason the researcher was making observations. The purpose of the researcher's observation was to categorise participating learners' degrees of autonomy to provide a sample for the tutors to observe when using the ALC. The tutors carried

out their observations as full participants, since they observed students identified in their samples during their normal teaching and learning sessions.

Limitations and validity of observations

Limitations to observation include personal or procedural reactivity where student participants could behave differently due to being aware that they are being observed by the tutor. The tutors who were the main participants (observer-as-participant), were not under observation, they were observers. By carrying out observations during their normal teaching practices there could be time constraints to making observations with unfamiliar criteria.

Degree of Structure

Attention to the degree of structure provides a means of understanding the nature of data collected during observation, and aids analysis for findings. Four levels of structure of observations are coding, pre-structuring, predictability, and recording of the data, on a continuum from low to high (Plowright, 2011). Where there is a low degree of structure there is open coding. Open coding means that criteria to be observed emerges during the observation and is not pre-set. Therefore, there is a low level of pre-structuring and the researcher is less able to predict what is to be recorded. This gives the researcher greater control over selecting what is recorded. Where there is a high degree of structure, data becomes more predictable. Closed coding is used with high pre-structuring and there is less control over what is recorded.

There was a high degree of structure for the observations carried out. Observations carried out by the researcher for sample selection were initially open coded, this changed to closed coding, with the observation of unfamiliar groups. Observation criteria were drawn up for these groups (Appendix 8). Participant tutors were provided with closed coded observation templates for making and recording their observations (Appendix 9). Table 4.4 below illustrates how the three dimensions for

observation provided an in-depth view through integration. Sensory data provided scope, type of participant provided breadth, whilst degree of structure provided depth to the data collected through observation.

TABLE 4.4 DEGREE OF STRUCTURE FOR OBSERVATIONS

Type of observer	*Observer as participant*	*Full Participant*
Role	Researcher	Tutors
Coding	Open and Closed	Closed
Level of structure	High	High
Method of observation	Visual Auditory Kinaesthesia	Visual Auditory Kinaesthesia

Degree of mediation

To ensure validity during data collection, the FraIM addresses the distance between the data collector and data gathered, through the degree of mediation. Proximal mediation is a closeness by the data collector to the data in terms of time and space. Distal mediation describes the distance between the collector and data, in terms of the time the data was collected, and the location of the data collector (Plowright, 2011). Observations carried out by the researcher for sampling, were proximal in terms of time and space, but detached from the consenting students under observation. There was no interaction between the researcher and the consenting students. The participant tutors were proximal to the data in terms of time and space as well as involved, close to the students being their tutors, as well as being observers of their degrees of autonomy.

Table 4.5 Degree of mediation for Observations

Type of observer	Observer as participant	Full Participant
Role	Researcher	Tutors
Degree of mediation	Proximal	Proximal
Explanation	Close to participants in time and space	Close to participants in time and space

Asking Questions (Data collection method)

Questions may be written or spoken in a variety of formats including face-to-face, paper and electronic means. As with observations, the degree of structure is open or closed. Using both open and closed questions allows for integration of both narrative and numeric data, providing both breadth and depth. Questions were asked during tutor interviews and the survey. Table 4.6 below shows how questions were asked following the FraIM.

TABLE 4.6- ASKING QUESTIONS

	Face-to-face	**Electronic**
Type	Tutor Activity - Interviews **Spoken**	Survey- Bristol online Survey Questionnaire **Written**
Degree of Structure	High and low Questions were both open and closed	High and low Questions were closed with open options for further discussion

Questions were both written and spoken using face-to-face and electronic means. There was a balanced use of both open and closed questions. This allowed for accuracy and depth. The Bristol Online Survey (BOS) was the electronic medium by which both closed and open questions were used to collect data to affirm both tutor and student aspects of the ALC, as well as tutors' views on learner autonomy and its pedagogic potential. Following the tutor task, questions on tutors' use of the ALC were asked during a semi -structured interview which comprised both open and closed questions. There was greater potential for personal and procedural reactivity during the face-to-face semi-structured interviews.

Limitations- Personal and procedural reactivity

Personal and procedural reactivity is an acknowledgement of the possible and potential effect, the presence of a researcher can have on the behaviour of

participants during data collection for example during observations or face to face interviews. Reactivity results in untypical behaviours (Bryman, 2008) and high levels of reactivity can result in unreliable data, as participants are responding in an untypical way. When asking questions during the interview, notable instances of personal reactivity were considered.

DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Data provides the evidence on which claims are made. This study uses data conversion and transformation from the FraIM, and the affirmative postmodernist method of deconstruction for data analysis. Conversion and transformation allow for data integration explained below. Deconstruction critically analyses a text to expose evidence of privileging (Rosenau, 1992; Barry, 2017). Derrida (1976), the main proponent of deconstruction, describes it as an approach which explores the relationship between what the writer of a text is aware of and what they are not aware of, exposed through the use of language, deconstruction '…attempts to make the not-seen accessible to sight.' (p.163). The process of deconstruction in this study is explained further in section 7.1.

Prior to data analysis, it is important to clarify how the different types of data collected is to be integrated (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The data from the survey though quantitative, is nominal or ordinal. This means that the data is non-parametric and facilitates integration with data from the tutor task and interview which produce narrative data. Integration of qualitative and quantitative data is a necessity in mixed methods research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, the process of data integration is by conversion and transformation.

Conversion is from one type to another, transformation is from one level to another (Fielding, 2012). The FraIM proposes 4 conversion choices, 1) numeric data to narrative e.g., using tables [NumNar]; 2) narrative to numeric e.g., using word counts [NarNum]; 3) written description and explanation of numeric data [DesExpNum]; 4) written analysis and description of narrative data [AnaDesNar]

(Plowright, 2011). The tags in square brackets e.g., [NumNar] are devised within this study for ease of reference to data analysis points. This study finds all 4 choices necessary for data conversion. Integration also involves data transformation which is the conversion of numeric data from one level to another (McDonald, 2014).

The FraIM advocates data transformation in two ways- data reduction, for example ordinal data being categorised nominally in groups; or data enlargement, e.g., nominal data ranked into ordinal groups. All narrative data is considered nominal or ordinal. In this study, only nominal and ordinal data were generated.

Deconstruction is a postmodernist method of identifying hidden meanings within a script, by challenging and exposing critical, privileging, or hegemonic perspectives (Derrida, 1976; Rosenau, 1992). Where there is a possibility of hidden meaning, the analysis engages deconstruction indicated by [Deconstruction] and critically analysed further. Figure 4.5 illustrates how data is integrated in this study.

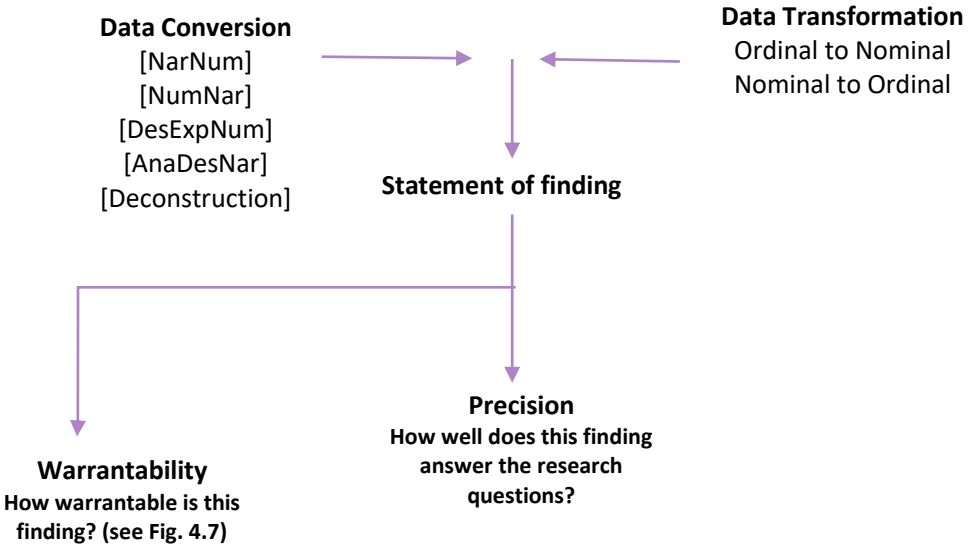

Figure 4.5 Data Integration

Data integration except for warrantability, takes place in Chapters Six (Survey), Seven (Tutor task) and Eight (Interviews). Warrantability of claims is made in Chapter Nine following figure 4.7 below.

4.5 Ethics Claims and Evidence

Acceptable claims require appropriate ethical considerations. Ethical procedures for this study have been carried out following BERA guidelines 2011 and 2018. The procedures are informed by four ethical considerations advocated by Stutchbury and Fox (2009), adapted in Figure 4.6 below. These considerations outline the benefits to participants, researcher responsibilities and conduct, as well as veracity and trustworthiness of claims and procedures.

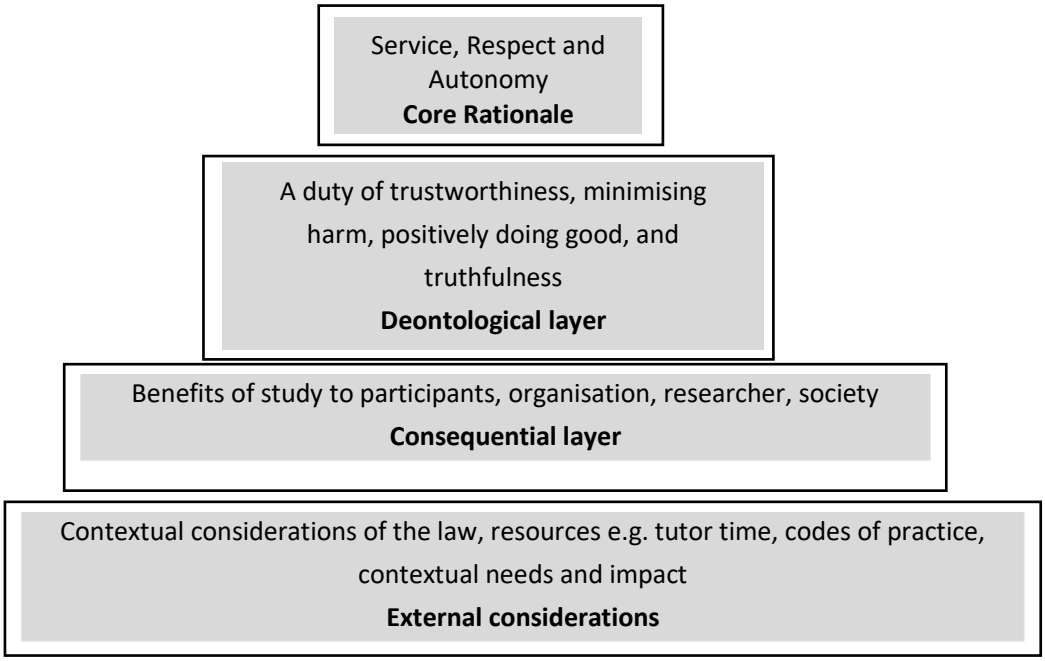

Figure: 4.6 Ethical grid for this study adapted from Stutchbury and Fox (2009)

Stutchbury and Fox (2009) provide a series of questions for each of the layers in fig. 4.6, which guide this study in its ethical considerations, securing a robust and rigorous approach, strengthening the warrantability of claims.

The core rationale comprises steps taken to establish positive relationships with participants. The key participants in this study are HE tutors, who are the active participants (BERA, 2018) in the pilot, survey and tutor task. The relationship between the researcher and participant tutors is collegial, there is neither potential obligation to

give consent, nor consequences for withdrawing consent. Students are passive participants relevant to the tutor task only. Tutor observations are made of their responses to set tasks during their normal teaching and learning sessions. Their participation is passive (BERA, 2018) as they do not have to do anything other than their usual routines, however their consent is secured for observations of their responses to be recorded. Tutors and their students were informed of the study. Students were invited to 'opt in' to tutor observation. Students who did not opt in, were not observed by the participant tutors when using the ALC and were not disadvantaged in their studies by non-observation.

The core rationale involves collaboration, which is facilitated by the pre-existing professional relationship, by reason of the researcher being an insider to the organisation. The relationship between researcher and tutors involves respecting the autonomy of participants, avoiding imposition and taking steps to foster genuine collaboration with all individuals participating in the study (Burgess, 2005). A corollary to avoiding imposition is social desirability (Plowright, 2011), although there is no risk of imposition due to the collegial relationship, there is a risk of participants consenting and providing agreeable data due to a socially desirable pre-existing relationship.

The core rationale includes the extent to which participants can be involved in validating findings, treating all participants with fairness and equality, so there is no privileging of one over the other (O' Leary, 2018).

The second layer for ethical consideration is deontological. Stutchbury and Fox (2009) suggest deontological ethical concerns which involve truth, fairness, reciprocity, and trustworthiness. In this study, tutors and students were made aware that once consent was given, they could withdraw at any time during the data collection period, up to a specified date. Untraceable codes with which participant data could be identified and deleted anonymously, were generated at the beginning of the survey should participants want to withdraw. Withdrawal from

process had no repercussions for the tutors or students. All participants were treated fairly and equally, for example during the tutor task, all queries for clarity were responded to and adjustments made to suit tutor understanding, where these adjustments did not adversely affect data collection. Tutors identified benefits to their teaching practices, some of the benefits were realised after participation. All participants were aware that the purposes of the research was for doctoral study.

Data gathered from all participants has been kept confidential and stored in an electronic encrypted format using a password protected drive. Participant responses are non-identifiable from the face validity exercise or the survey. Participants might be able to recognise their contribution to the tutor task and interview. To reduce the certainty of identification, tutors were not made aware of who else participated.

Ethical clearance was sought and obtained from the HEI with which I have conducted this study (Appendix 10). The requirement from the HEI involved, to obtain permission from the faculty directorate concerned was carried out. Key areas of ethical consideration for this research study include – information and consent, withdrawal, confidentiality, and storage of data. Procedures for all areas of ethics were followed as directed by the Open University research ethics guidelines.

This study has been designed and carried out in a way that reduces potential disadvantage to the participants. All the active participants are working within a context of heavy workloads and limited time constraints. For this reason, the research design made use of flexible, time saving, options to get the best possible data without imposition or constituting a source of additional workload. Deontological detriment to participant is reduced by:

1) The survey taking roughly 15mins to complete, with quick yes/no questions and a space to provide further information if needed.
2) Tutors being provided recording templates for the tutor task to help structure essential aspects.

Consequentially, research studies should provide a range of benefits to all concerned (Stutchbury and Fox, 2009). This research study provides a range of benefits to tutor, students and the programme. By participating in the study, tutor benefits included finding out new ideas and strategies for their pedagogy and research methods. Benefit to the students as passive participants was futuristic i.e., the development of a means, by which they could analyse their own autonomous responses, on future academic direction tasks.

To the programme, the availability of the construct is a beneficial strategy ensuring the development of student autonomy in learning. This is needed in current challenging times which are marked by a decrease in face-to-face teaching, and an increase in academic directed time. This challenge is not limited to the organisation within which this study takes place, Gibbs and Jenkins (2013) express concerns about staff student ratios in HE

> Many fear that this increase in student numbers without related increases in numbers of staff will result in a decline in quality. After reviewing the research evidence on class size and quality we argue that without rapidly changing teaching and assessment methods there will be a dramatic decline in the quality of British HE (p. 11).

Gibbs and Jenkins (2013) discuss issues of large class sizes in relation to quality of teaching. The recognition of a pedagogic potential in learner autonomy and how it can constitute a 'teaching' method in HE, is a key benefit from this study. Ecologically, this is a low risk study with limited scope for harm to either the passive or active participants. As mentioned earlier, the study adheres to the BERA guidelines, enough for the scope of interest, furthermore, data gathering, and storage follows these as well as GDPR (Voigt and Von Dem Bussche (2017). There is efficient use of the time tutors have given to this study and only warrantable claims are made following analysis. Table 4.7 presents the activity and timescale for collection of data for this study.

Table 4.7 – Data collection activity and timescale

Period	**Activity**	**Ethics approval**
July to August 2017	Survey (RQs 1and 3)	2017
July to September 2017	Semi structured interviews (RQ2) Tutor activity templates (RQ2) Tutor record of reflection (RQ2)	2017
July to October 2017	Tutor interviews (RQs 1-3)	2017

4.5.1 CLAIMS AND EVIDENCE - WARRANTABILITY OF CLAIMS

The quality of research is logically evaluated on its paradigmatic terms (Healy and Perry 2000). Pragmatic approaches have been criticised for prioritising practical knowledge, when compared to the near absolute accuracy of scientific approaches (Johnson, 2013). However, this notion of absolute accuracy in experimental approaches has been exposed as a myth (Fanelli, 2010), giving room to other means of establishing trustworthiness along paradigmatic lines. In this instance, trustworthiness is achieved pragmatically through warrantability.

The warrantability procedure outlined by the FraIM methodology (Plowright, 2011), states that warrantability is about

> ...providing the best available evidence to support the research claims and arriving logically at valid and true conclusions (Plowright, 2011. Section 11.2).

It also involves

> …considering and subsequently rejecting alternative explanations for the conclusions (Plowright, 2011. Section 11.2).

The FraIM adopts Toulmin's (1958) approach to warrantability involving qualifying conditions and backing conditions for claims. Qualifying conditions provide further explanation to the warrant for claims. Policy and theoretical contexts, data and data sources, data collection methods and analysis provide the backing conditions. The warrant is found in the reasons for the final conclusions drawn, having been skeptically subjected to alternative interpretation (Plowright, 2011). The FraIM's suggestion for finding alternative interpretation to data is limited, in that a strategy for doing this is not provided. Interrogating a text for alternative interpretation is a means of deconstruction (Rosenau, 1992). This study addresses this limitation within the FraIM by drawing on affirmative postmodernist interpretation and deconstruction to explore the possibility of alternative explanations. Thus, the warrantability of claims is supported by backing conditions with postmodernist interpretation and deconstruction. Figure 4.7 is an adaptation from Plowright (2011), illustrating how claims are interrogated for their warrantability.

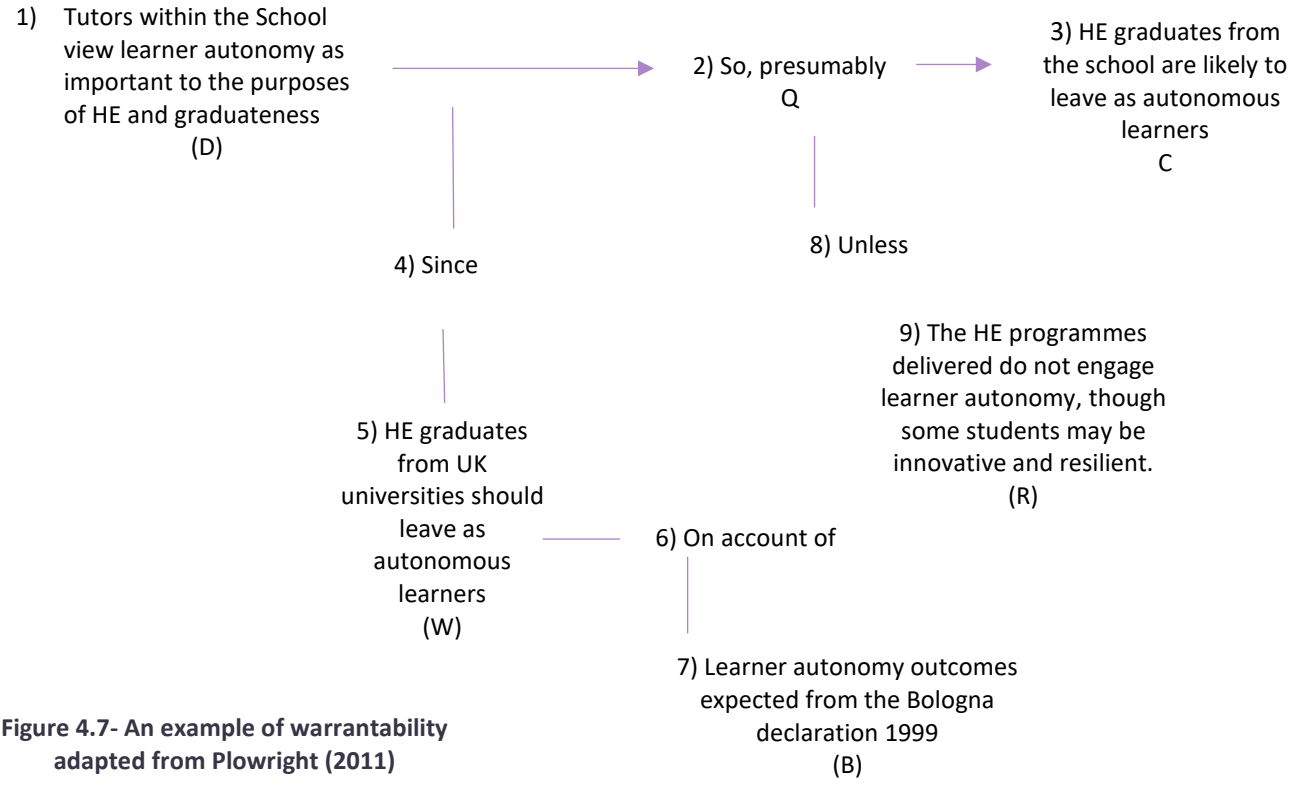

Figure 4.7- An example of warrantability adapted from Plowright (2011)

Warrantability involves inferences about the relationship between evidence and claims (Plowright, 2011). Data (D) involves findings made from data, which are

subjected to qualifying conditions (Q) by arguing the possibility of an alternative explanation (R). The claim (C) and findings from the data (D) join to make the warrant (W) which is supported by the backing conditions (B). Chapter 10 provides an analysis of findings from data, for the warrantability of claims in this study, following the FraIM (Plowright, 2011) and Toulmin (1958).

Backing conditions

It is necessary at this point, to identify some of the backing conditions (Table 5.2) for warrant supports already identified in the previous chapters.

TABLE 5.2- EXAMPLES OF BACKING CONDITIONS FOR WARRANTS WITHIN THIS STUDY:

Policy and Theoretical Framework	**Research decisions at the Policy and Theoretical stages**
Policy	Learner autonomy is a necessary outcome of HE.
Policy	Learner autonomy is implicit in UK HE policy documentation.
Review of literature	Locus of control is a key indicator of degree of learner autonomy.
Review of literature	Suitable conditions for engaging learner autonomy involve what the tutor does and how the student responds.
Review of literature	Student-centred interactive and transformational teaching styles engage learner autonomy.
Review of literature	Individual autonomy is intrinsic, natural, and relational, it develops from social collaboration.
Method	**Research decisions at the methods stage**
Overall research design	A pragmatic approach ensured that there were no pressures on participants or data to conform to assumed research protocols
Overall research design	The research design is applicable and repeatable.
Survey	For the electronic survey, the random anonymous sample of tutors provided untraceable codes with which the researcher could, on request, withdraw participant data without knowing who the participant was.
Tutor task	The convenience sample of tutors for the tutor task were peers of the researcher, so that there were no potential power relations between researcher and tutors participating on the tutor task
Tutor task	A double-blind sample of consenting students was provided to each tutor. Tutors were unaware of how students in the sample provided have been categorised in terms of their learner to avoid bias or the researcher 'leading' the participants
Tutor task	Consenting students were aware of the study and the possibility that they may or might not be included in the sample, this limited any chance of procedural reactivity

These include the policy and theoretical context, data sources and methods. The appropriateness of decisions made at each stage of the research process determine the extent to which warrants are strong or weak. The backing conditions for

warrants are appropriate as they are relevant to the research questions and the overall research design and methodology.

4.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study adopts an affirmative postmodernist, pragmatic, methodology for construct and research design. The FraIM has provided a structure within which mixed methods are selected, providing a pragmatic approach to finding ethical and warrantable answers to the research questions. To contribute a relevant current construct to engage learner autonomy for teaching and learning general, a pragmatic approach has been taken to adopt the most relevant methods to achieve aims for research and practice in relation to learner autonomy. The use of IDT is pragmatic, as it is instrumental in providing an appropriate theoretical means for construct design. Having designed the construct, the empirical research process is reported in the next three chapters. Involving firstly, a survey of practitioners' views on the feasibility of both aspects of the ALC as well as on the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy; and secondly, tutor use of the ALC in their day-to-day practice followed by interviews. Thus, the data collection stages are:

1) Survey- investigates tutor's views on what learner autonomy is, the importance of learner autonomy to HE, including its relevance to quality teaching, and the feasibility of the elements of the ALC as tutor strategies and a means of tutors evaluating degrees of learner autonomy.

2) Tutor Task- A practical use of the ALC by a group of tutors in their day-to-day teaching over a five-week period.

3) Tutor interviews- semi formal interviews of tutors who carried out the tutor task to establish their experience of using the ALC in practice.

Chapter Five- Data Collection

5.1 Introduction

The ALC has been designed and investigated in this study, to assess its feasibility in enabling tutors to recognise the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. The ALC is intended primarily as a means by which tutors may foster and evaluate degrees of learner autonomy in their normal day to day teaching practices. This chapter discusses the data collection procedure for the main study. The data collection exercise involved asking questions via Survey (section 5.2), Tutor task and Interview (section 5.3).

PRIVILEGING AND PRECISION

Narrative and numeric data were collected avoiding privileging (O'Leary, 2018) in terms of levels and types of data (Plowright, 2011). Numeric data was not considered more important or accurate than narrative data, nor ordinal more than nominal. Importance of data was considered pragmatically, in line with the extent of the contribution made to addressing the research questions, i.e., level of precision. All data contributed to addressing the research questions, however the level of precision, separated data in terms importance. Findings were made through an analysis and interpretation of integrated data. Following the FraIM, data was integrated through conversion and transformation.

5.2 The Survey

Online Surveys (formerly BOS) provided a quick and efficient means to engage several H.E tutors, as well as a means for formatting questions clearly, with design opportunities for further information on specific aspects of each question. In addition to design, the BOS also facilitated distribution to participants and analysis of data, saving time and encouraging greater participation.

The survey questionnaire generated data through a series of closed, open and multiple-choice questions, to ascertain tutors' views on learner autonomy, support strategies, subcomponents of the ALC, descriptors of states of autonomy and the relationship between learner autonomy and the TQ and LE strands of the TEF2.

The 15-item survey questionnaire (Appendix 11) was administered within a school under a faculty within the HEI. 25 responses were received, including responses from the 7 tutors participating in the tutor task.

Table 5.1 illustrates two sections of the questionnaire. Section 1- Strategies for Learner Autonomy and HE covered questions 5 to 10 and section 2 -Learner Autonomy, Teaching Quality and Learning Environments, covered questions 11 to 15.

TABLE 5.1 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Section	**Survey Questions**	**Research Questions**
Discrete data	1 – 4	
Section 1 ***Strategies for Learner Autonomy and HE***	5 – 10	RQs 1, 2 and 3
Section 2 ***Learner Autonomy Teaching Quality and Learning Environments***	11 - 15	RQ 1 and 2

SURVEY SECTION A

(Questions 1 to 10)

Question 1 generated anonymous identifier codes set by the participants, comprising the initials of their secondary school and how many years they have been teaching. This enabled a respondent's data to be deselected if they decided to withdraw from the process. The researcher is unable to identify a respondent through this code, should a participant wish to withdraw, the respondent would

provide the initials of their secondary school and years of teaching and the corresponding row of data would be removed confidentially.

Questions 2 to 4 provided bio information such as gender, length of time teaching in HE and area of specialization within the Faculty. This information was needed to identify patterns in responses i.e., possible discrete explanations for choices e.g., gender related choices or experience related choices.

Survey questions 5 to 15 were derived from further exploration and reflection guided by literature on learner autonomy reviewed in Chapter Three and HE policy literature explored in Chapter Two. Questions 5,8 and 10 were guided by a review of literature in sections 3.3 and 3.4, questions 6, 7 and 9 by policy literature in section 2.2 and questions 11 to 15 by section 2.3.

Question 5

Question 5 gained tutor views of the learner evaluative aspect of the ALC. Terms were generated to achieve the purposes of the study for example, 'degree of learner autonomy statements' are statements designed in line with the four degrees of learner autonomy explained in Chapter Four. These are intentionally referred to as 'degree of learner autonomy statements' as they describe all four proposed degrees of learner autonomy, broadly divided into learner autonomy statements and learner heteronomy statements. This allowed for further investigation of degrees of learner autonomy, rather than a polarization of autonomy and heteronomy. Table 5.2 below, lists learner the degree of learner autonomy statements.

TABLE 5.2: DEGREE OF AUTONOMY STATEMENTS WITH OPTION CODES AS IN SURVEY Q5

Learner Autonomy Statements	**Learner Heteronomy Statements**
Independence in Learning (5a) Knowing what to do to get results (5j) Having a proactive approach to learning (5c) Accepting responsibility for both positive and negative outcomes (5d) Being responsible for own actions (5e) Being in charge of own decisions (5h) Considering the learning needs of self and others(5l) Being able to communicate concerns effectively (5o)	Needing to understand before action is taken (5f) Complying with requirements (5g) Knowing when to ask for guidance (5b) Requiring affirmation of action to be confident of choices made (5n) Having a reactive approach to learning (5i) Expecting others to be accountable when own goals are not achieved. (5p) Expectation for others to provide guidance (5m) Depending on tutor guidance for all aspects of learning (5k)

By selecting any of these options, logically, tutors agree that the related degrees of learner autonomy exist and that they describe the extent to which a learner is autonomous.

Questions 6 and 7

Question 6 investigated participant views on the functions of a university education. The options here are reflections on the purposes of HE from the initiatives explored in sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 as well as the researcher's experience as an academic. Having established tutor views on the purposes of HE, question 7 found out the extent to which participants agreed that learner autonomy was relevant to purposes of H.E. If it is found that learner autonomy is considered important or relevant to the purposes of engaging with HE, this identifies with the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy with implications for making it more explicit.

Question 8

Question 8 explored tutors' attitudes to engaging learner autonomy. The assumption was that tutors who plan for learner autonomy in their teaching, explicitly value its role within teaching and learning. This question was designed to enable participants provide narrative data on the autonomy support strategies that they use (RQ1 and 2). Firstly, to investigate any similarity with the tutor strategy part of the ALC, secondly, to examine the value that other strategies could bring to the study.

Question 9

This question investigated views on the role of learner autonomy in both formal and informal learning. Employment is requisite for admission on to widening participation programmes. The focus of the question on the role of learner autonomy in differentiating between a graduate and a non-graduate was intentional. This was to strengthen warrantability, to increase the likelihood of participants thinking about the position of learner autonomy in relation to graduateness, and its position outside the H.E learning environment.

Question 10

This question established the extent to which respondents affirmed the six subcomponents of the tutor aspect of the ALC, as a means of engaging learner autonomy. Participants will have indicated autonomy support strategies that they use when responding to question 8. The order of these questions was intentional to avoid leading participants to select strategies proposed by this study as their own practice. Tutors may have selected any of the options in this question. Four options which are not part of the ALC were included to further strengthen warrantability.

SURVEY SECTION B

Section B generated data on views of participants on links between learner autonomy and the teaching quality and learning environments as discussed in Chapter Two. The closed question format was mediated by an open option for each question, giving opportunity for narrative data for respondents to expand on their views.

Questions 11, 12 and 13

Questions 11, 12 and 13 investigated tutors' views on the importance of learner autonomy for teaching quality. The use of 'Yes/No' questions enabled a clear-cut response as whether learner autonomy was considered important. A gradation of responses was deliberately avoided, as an unequivocal response was required to counteract the implicit assumption of learner autonomy, as observed in literature on teaching quality. Tutors had the option of providing reasons for their choice. This counterbalanced the limitation of closed 'Yes/No' questions, giving opportunity for detailed narrative data.

Questions 14, 15

Questions 14 and 15 investigated tutor's views on the importance of learner autonomy to learning environments in HE in similar fashion to the previous.

The survey was disseminated through the school-wide email system and produced both narrative and numeric data from 25 respondents. The email to potential

respondents explained the purpose of the study and the arrangements for consent and withdrawal.

5.3 Practical Tutor Exercise (Tutor Task)

The practical tutor exercise involved implementation of the ALC in real teaching and learning sessions, data was gathered by tutor observation and reflection. Use of the ALC was followed by semi structured interviews. The tutor task was structured by a two-part template with guidance on planning, observation, and evaluation, necessary to ascertain the feasibility of the ALC as means of engaging the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Tutor tasks were followed by individual semi structured interviews which were recorded and transcribed.

TUTOR SAMPLE

A convenience sample of eight tutors responded to an invitation to participate in the study, from a population of 12 tutors on the Stuch programme. All eight respondents were included in the sample to mitigate possible attrition. An appropriate sample size is one that adequately answers the research questions (Marshall, 1996). The tutor task being one of three data sources responding to the research questions was such that the participation of 4 tutors would be enough to provide rich and thick data (Dibley, 2011) as findings from this data source will be integrated with findings from the survey and tutor interviews.

LEARNER SAMPLES

A double-blind sample was drawn by the researcher for each tutor using observation. MacGill (2016) describes a double-blind sample as one in which two levels of participants in the same trial are unaware of how the other is placed. For example, doctors in clinical trials not knowing which patients in their sample have been administered placebos or a real drug, and patients not being sure of whether they are a part of the sample. In this instance, tutors were aware of who was in their sample but not the degree of autonomy to which each had been allocated.

Students were not sure if they have been allocated to a sample. Only consenting students were observed by the researcher for the sample, and not all consenting students were selected in this way the sample given to the tutors participating in the tutor task was double blind.

Eight tutors agreed to participate in the practical tutor exercise. Two tutors could no longer participate due to health and workload pressures. In total, six tutors participated. A purposive sample of students were selected. Eight groups of students were evaluated following the 'degrees of learner autonomy' categories. From several consenting students in each group, eight were selected by the researcher to be observed by the tutors. Four tutors used the tutor task template to record data, and six tutors were available for interviews at the end of the process.

Each double-blind sample given to tutors, comprised two students observed as showing each of the four 'degrees of learner autonomy' categories. The categories are Autonomous (A), Autonomous Dependent (AD), Heteronomous (H), Heteronomous Independent (HI). The observation criteria (Appendix 8) was used to allocate the students to each category. Each participating tutor was supplied names selected for a sample, labelled Student one, Student two, up to Student eight. First names of the selected eight students were identified however, the 'degree of learner autonomy' category was not indicated. This was to ensure that the tutor view was not influenced by the researcher view. The sample size was limited to 8 students so that tutors could practically observe student responses during the planned activities, in addition to mitigate possible student absences. Tutors were provided a selection of students to observe as they were using the ALC for the first time. For this reason, as the researcher I drew a sample of students for each tutor to facilitate the process. This made it easier for tutors and helped tutors who initially were not confident of what to do.

TUTOR TASK

The tutor task involved ensuring at least two of the subcomponents from the tutor strategy part of the ALC (Fig 1.1 repeated below), influence specific teaching activity following findings from face validity exercise. At the start of the module, tutors

evaluated students in the sample, giving their initial impression of the degree of autonomy with which their students had responded to tasks, using the tutor task template (Appendix 9). The purpose of the initial assessment was to familiarise the tutor with the tutor's learner-evaluative part of the ALC (performance outcomes) and provide a view of their initial judgements of the sample students' degree of autonomy for later reference.

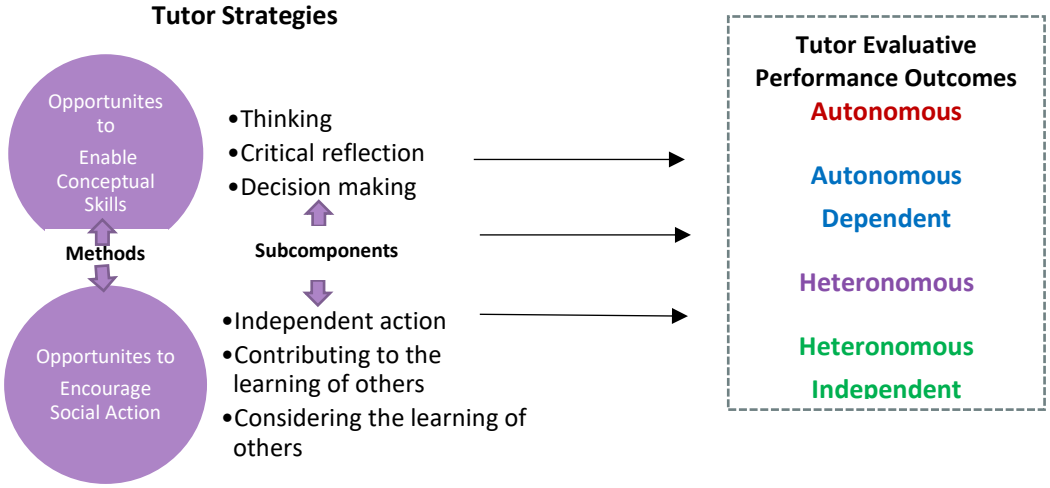

Figure 1.1- The ALC: methods, sub-components, and performance

Steps taken for the tutor task are illustrated in figure 5.1 below. Tutors were asked to design an activity, ensuring that at least two of the teaching subcomponents of the ALC (Fig 1.1) were represented. Tutors then observed the responses of the students and indicated the degree of autonomy with which they perceived the sample students were responding, using the Tutor task template (Appendix 9). They were to provide two activities based on a problem/need. Tasks in each activity were to be linked to at least two of the six tutor subcomponents. This was to ensure that their selected teaching activity was geared towards engaging the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. At the end of each session, tutors were asked to evaluate the responses of students in the sample to the learning activity, using the learner autonomy codes on the Tutor task template.

The template is made of subcomponents from the tutor strategy part of the ALC (Fig 1.1) which inform the tutor's autonomy support strategy and the tutor evaluative degrees of learner autonomy (performance outcomes). Tutors choose at least two of: Thinking (1), Critical reflection (2), Independent action (3), Decision making (4),

Contributing to the learning of others (5), Considering the learning of others (6). This part ensures that at least two subcomponents are present in the teaching activity provided. Degree of autonomy shown by each student under tutor observation, is evaluated using the learner autonomy codes which are – Autonomous (A), Autonomous Dependent (AD), Heteronomous (H), Heteronomous Independent (HI). Tutors were provided with simple descriptions of each degree of learner autonomy (Appendix 12).

Tutors were asked to prepare a brief reflection (500 words or less) on their experience of using the ALC. This allowed for proximal mediation of data (Plowright, 2011) i.e., the distance between data and researcher (in time and space), important for rigour in findings. Interviews were to take place as soon as possible after the second Tutor task. Figure 5.1 below illustrates the implementation of the tutor task.

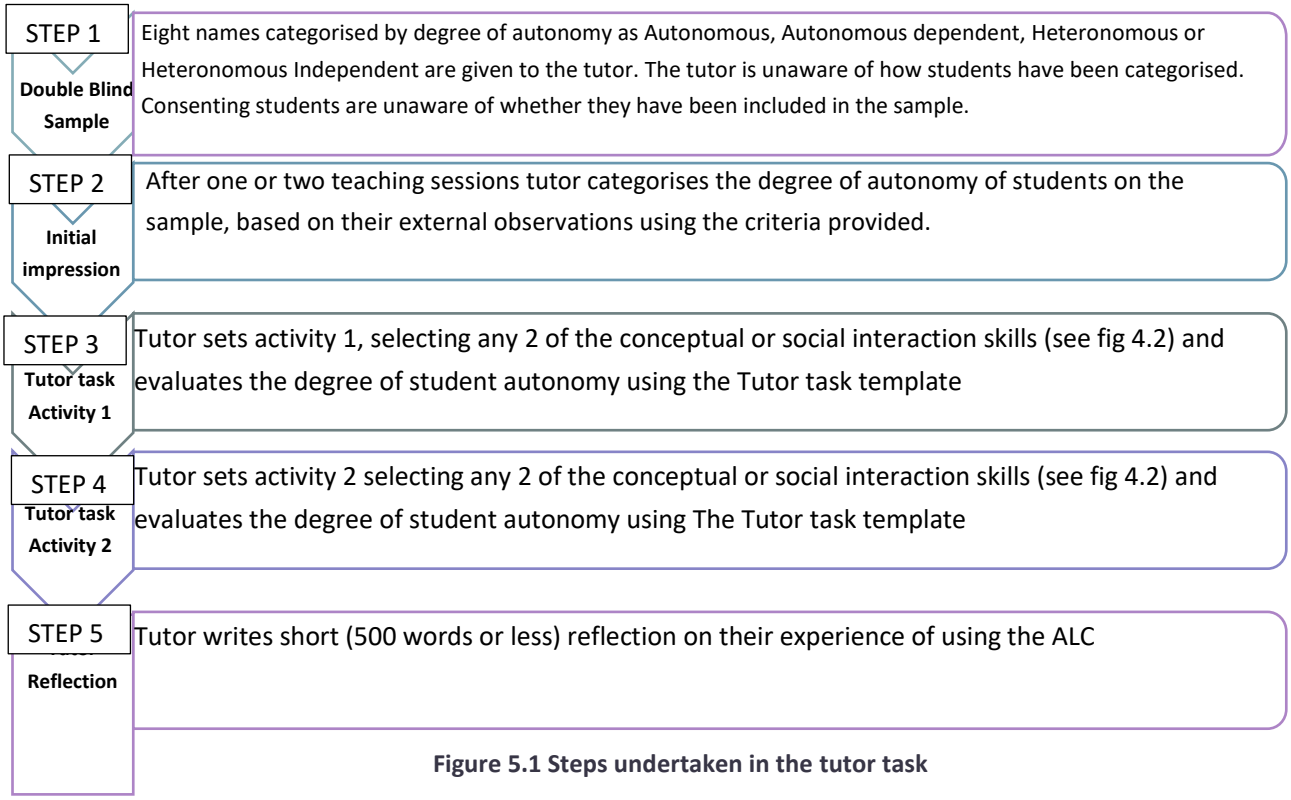

Figure 5.1 Steps undertaken in the tutor task

A pre-structured template (Appendix 9) was provided for tutors to record the tasks they set and evaluate degrees of learner autonomy. Table 5.3 below identifies the sources of data collection for the tutor task.

TABLE 5.3: RECORD OF TUTOR TASK ACTIVITY FOR ANALYSIS

Activity for Analysis	Researcher	Participant Tutors
Double Blind Sample	√	
Initial tutor impression of student degree of autonomy		√
Task 1 Tutor Sub-components, evaluation of student degree of autonomy		√
Task 2 Tutor sub-components, evaluation of learner degree of autonomy		√
Tutor reflection		√

TUTOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

On completion of the tutor task, interviews were recorded and stored securely in a password protected cloud. Recordings were made using the Apple voice memo function. This saved the recordings as mp4, facilitating secure transfer to the transcriber. The transcribers used have a high standard of confidentiality and professionalism for example, data transfer, including audio uploads and transcript downloads, is secure and encrypted with 256 bit SSL. These transcribers are used by several HEIs including the one where this study is taking place.

At the start of each interview participants were reminded of the ethical guidelines communicated during the survey and tutor task. This included possibility of withdrawal and the HREC number 2588 (Appendix 10) for ethical clearance. Participants were advised to avoid using terms by which they could be identified where possible.

Participants were asked ten semi-structured questions addressing RQs 1 to 3 (Appendix 13). Semi-structured questions were used to give the respondents the freedom to explore their experience and express their understanding from engaging with the process. Six participants were available for interview.

Interviews were carried out as soon as possible after each tutor task.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (QUESTIONS 1- 10)

Question 1

Interview question one was designed to acquire background information about the tutors. This could provide a means for making comparisons to identify possible patterns between tutor responses.

Questions 2, 3 and 5

Questions 2, 3 and 5 explored tutor views of learner autonomy in response to RQ1. Questions 2 and 3 was designed to generate narrative data which could be integrated with numeric data from survey questions 6 and 7. Tutors had the opportunity to provide richer detail on the extent to which learner autonomy was relevant to HE, as well as the role the tutor had to play. Question 5 was designed to integrate with survey question 8, which investigated strategies tutors normally use to engage learner autonomy. Tutor responses would be examined alongside outcomes from the review of literature in chapter 2.

Questions 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9

These questions addressed RQs 2 and 3. By commenting on their experience of using the ALC, tutors will identify or otherwise, a pedagogic potential to learner autonomy, they would also be confirming the extent to which the ALC was useful. Questions 6 and 7 drill down to specific aspects of the tutor strategy part of the ALC, to confirm their suitability as well as their function in getting tutors to be more cognisant of learner autonomy. Questions 8 and 9 concentrate on specific aspects of the tutor's learner-evaluative part of the ALC, to find out the extent to which these aspects were useful for evaluating degrees of learner autonomy. Question 8 also explores the extent to which the degrees of learner autonomy are original.

5.4 Conclusion

Narrative and numeric data was gathered via three methods in this study. This included 1) a school wide survey to gain a broad view from experienced HE tutors of on learner autonomy, the importance of learner autonomy to teaching and learning quality, its relevance to higher education, as well as the feasibility of the elements of the ALC to enable tutors engage the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. 2) A tutor task activity whereby six tutors used the ALC in their normal day-to-day teaching practices, to identify its feasibility in practice as a means of engaging the proposed pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Data was gathered through feedback templates and a short reflection (written). 3) Semi formal interviews through which tutors relate their experience of using the ALC. Thus, mixed data on the reflective and practical experience of tutors constitutes a pragmatic, integrated, methodology.

The next three chapters report analysis of data and findings from the survey (Chapter Six) and tutor task (Chapter Seven) and Tutor interviews (Chapter Eight).

Chapter Six- Data Analysis Integration and Findings (Survey)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined how data was collected for the survey, tutor task and tutor interviews. Furthermore, being a case study, data from these different sources i.e., survey, tutor task and interview has been gathered, analysed, interpreted, deconstructed where necessary, and integrated (figure 4.5) to provide a basis on which findings are made.

This chapter presents an analysis of findings from the Survey only, the next two chapters present findings from the tutor tasks and interviews, respectively.

The survey questionnaire was in two sections, Section A- Learner Autonomy in HE, and Section B - Learner Autonomy, Teaching and Learning Quality. For purposes of analysis and integration, the survey questions were re-grouped into three areas emerging from policy and literature.

These areas constitute themes which will continue through to the end of this study.

Ryan and Bernard (2003, p. 88) clarify that

> 'Themes come both from the data (an inductive approach) and from the investigator's prior theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (an a priori approach). A priori themes come from the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied; from already agreed on professional definitions found in literature reviews; … from researchers' values, theoretical orientations, and personal experience.'

The three themes below are a priori, they developed from my reflection on learner autonomy in policy and the review of literature, as well as from my values, theoretical orientations, and personal experience.

A) identification (Q5)- Identifying what learner autonomy is, this is to see how the data may address the issue of theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy identified in chapter three, involving question 5 only.

B) relevance to HE- Learner autonomy and HE Outcomes, questions 6,7,9,11, and 15, this area addresses tutors' views on the relevance of learner autonomy to HE, as identified in UK HE policy literature in Chapter Two.

C) pedagogic potential- questions 8,10,12,13 and 14 address the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. The term emerged during this study and involves tutors' recognition of the potential within learner autonomy to facilitate the teaching and learning process of the individual and others.

Questions 1-4 deal with participant background information, combined with areas A – C i.e., Identification, Relevance to HE and Pedagogic potential, constitute the four sections for this chapter.

The three areas A – C are also used to structure the analysis of data from the tutor task and interviews in the next two chapters, to facilitate integration and produce clear findings.

Eleven survey questions elicited nominal, ordinal and narrative data; these data are non-parametric; thus, data conversion and transformation (see fig 4.5) are used to aid data interpretability and integration.

6.2 Background information of survey respondents

(Qs 1 to 4)

Discussed in the previous chapter, questions 1 to 4 dealt with ethics and background information i.e., participant codes, gender, length of time teaching in HE and area of specialization within the School. An analysis of the range of data on the three background areas of gender, length of time teaching in HE and area of specialisation, verified the scope and representativeness of survey data. Of the total number of respondents (n=25), 18 were female and 7 were male i.e., 72% and 28% respectively. On the one hand, this gender proportion appears atypical of HE tutors. Data from the OECD (2015) on gender difference between HE tutors in the UK shows 44.4% women and 55.6% men. However, there are disciplinary differences in areas such as education and

medicine (OECD 2015). Being Faculty of Education lecturers, the proportion of female to male, tends to be higher (OECD, 2015).

For 'length of time in education', proportions are depicted in Table 6.1. Nine tutors responding to the survey had been in HE for 12 years and over, seven for between 8 and 12 years, six for between 4 and 8 years and three for 3 years or less.

TABLE 6.1 SPREAD OF HE EXPERIENCE OF TUTORS PARTICIPATING IN THE SURVEY Questionnaire

Length of time teaching in HE	Number	Proportion
Over 12 years	9	36%
8 – 12 years	7	28%
4-8 years	6	24%
3 years or less	3	12%

Data on area of specialisation provided an opportunity to explore any differences in the value placed on learner autonomy in relation to specialism related demands. There was a broad spread across education specialisms, though the number of individuals in majority of the specialisms were low. A limitation of this being that there were no other respondents within these specialisms with which comparisons could be made if necessary. Most of the programmes within the school were represented including the Stuch programme. These areas of background information were considered where necessary during analysis of findings for precision.

6.3: Identification-Tutors' views of Learner Autonomy

(Survey Q5)

Data analysed from tutor choices made from the 16 degree of learner autonomy statements in question 5, provided a means for gaining tutors' views on learner autonomy. Respondents were asked to select which statements they thought were indicative of learner autonomy. These statements included descriptions of varying degrees of autonomy from learner autonomy to learner heteronomy. Narrative data was

converted to numeric data in the form of percentages [NarNum], presented in Figure 6.1 below. The percentages grouped proportions of tutors agreeing with each statement.

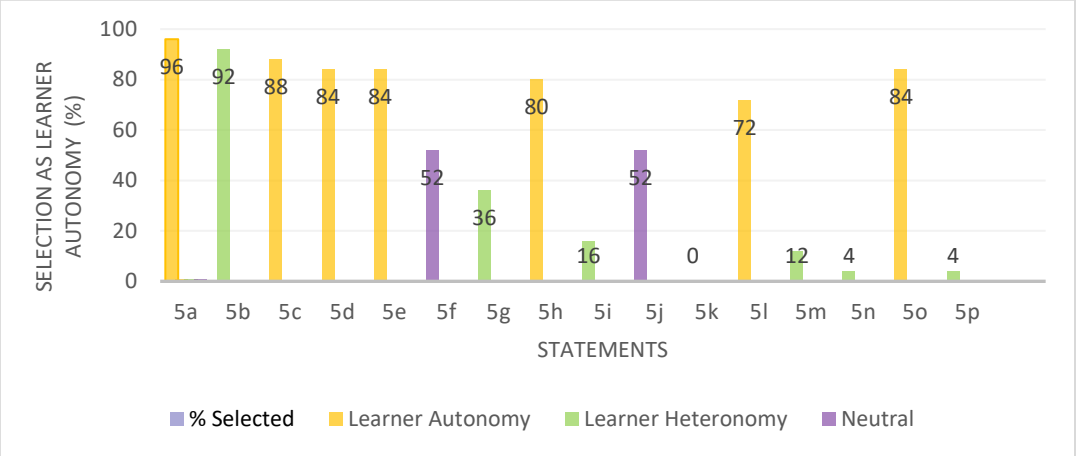

Figure 6.1 Tutors views of Learner Autonomy

Figure 6.1 presents the extent to which tutors agree that the statements provided indicate learner autonomy. Eight statements were designed to be indicative of learner autonomy and eight of learner heteronomy (Table 5.2, Chapter 5); tutors were requested to select those indicative of learner autonomy *only*. In this study, tutor agreement is how confirmation of the statements will be obtained.

Overall, 15 of the 16 statements were selected by each of the 25 respondents as indicative of learner autonomy.

This demonstrated authenticity in the data as the responses were not immediately in line with researcher expectations, having designed eight for autonomy and eight for heteronomy. Closer analysis and description of narrative data [AnaDesNar] identified that the rate of selection of statements was made to differing degrees. Most learner heteronomy statements had lower percentages, whilst most learner autonomy statements had higher percentages. Two statements can be said to be 'neutral' 5f and 5j with a percentage of 52% each, thus could be either indicative of learner autonomy or of learner heteronomy.

5f- Needing to understand before taking action
5j- Knowing what to do to get results

Only one statement was not selected at all as indicative of learner autonomy-

Statement 5K- 'Depending on tutor guidance for all aspects of learning',

clarifying that in the participants' view, this statement does not indicate learner autonomy.

A more rigorous means of analysis was needed, as accepting solely high percentages was insufficient. The use of a benchmark provides a point at which an indication of actual agreement may be found, however, as Dixon found in his study, there is no standard benchmark figure or means of calculating respondent agreement for learner autonomy (Dixon, 2013).

Existing ways of measuring agreement with non-parametric data in general are binary, involving two sources of data. For example, inter-rater agreement, or proportion of overall agreement; designed for measuring agreement between two methods of evaluation, or the opinions of two experts on the presence or absence of subjects such as diseases (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007). These approaches could not suitably be transposed to benchmarking agreement as to what constitutes learner autonomy, as firstly, in this instance there are 25 sources of data rather than 2. Secondly, existing means of analysing agreement are based on phenomena that are bounded, or concrete. For example, there are common descriptors for identifying diseases and way of dealing with them. Clarity of boundary is not the case with learner autonomy as the literature and rate of tutor selection has indicated. A different way of interpreting the data was found with median percentage scores.

Description and explanation of numeric data [DesExpNum] involved examining median percentage scores which allowed for greater precision, as the median is the best midpoint indicator for data with outliers (Hatcher, 2013; Ma, 2006). Having grouped data according to whether they were learner autonomy statements or learner heteronomy statements, the distribution of percentages shows outliers with the learner autonomy statements i.e., 52%, as well as with the learner heteronomy statements, 96% and 4%. To gain the median percentage score, nominal data i.e., the percentages, were arranged as ordinal data and grouped. This provided further explanation of the higher and lower percentages. Examining median scores revealed that there was a difference

between learner autonomy and learner heteronomy statements. In the absence of a benchmark, the difference served to clarify more precisely between learner autonomy and learner heteronomy.

TABLE 6.2 MEDIAN SCORES Q5

Learner autonomy statement	**Proportion of agreement %**	**Median score%**
5a	96	84
5c	88	
5d	84	
5e	84	
5o	84	
5h	80	
5l	72	
5j	52	
Learner heteronomy statement	Proportion of agreement %	Median score%
5b	92	14
5f	52	
5g	36	
5i	16	
5m	12	
5n	4	
5p	4	
5k	0	

The median percentage score for learner autonomy statements is 84%, while the median percentage score for learner heteronomy statements is 14%. The difference in rate of selection, shows that statements with lower percentages were less likely to be indicative of learner autonomy and therefore more likely to be indicative of learner heteronomy. Conversely, statements with higher percentages are more likely to be indicative of learner autonomy and therefore less likely to be indicative of learner heteronomy. This supports the notion of learner autonomy being a matter of degree. Further analysis showed that there was no significant difference in terms of gender, length of time as an H.E tutor or specialism in the choices made by the respondents.

Furthermore, analysis uncovered an anomaly with statement 5b-

'knowing when to ask for guidance'

There was disagreement between the researcher and participants as to whether this is a statement of learner autonomy or heteronomy. As researcher I designed this as a statement of learner heteronomy. According to this analysis, a percentage score of 92% places it from the perspective of the participants as a learner autonomy statement. In revision of my initial assumption, this finding will be considered a learner autonomy statement, in the sense of autonomous dependence.

Findings 6.3 Identification (Q5)

Findings indicate that tutors agree that the learner autonomy statements describe what learner autonomy is, they also demonstrate the possibility of there being degrees of learner autonomy. This contributes to providing a more homogenous perspective of learner autonomy. Therefore, learner autonomy is seen by tutors as a state of proactivity and independence, involving decision making and own responsibility for learning and consideration of the learning others, in line with the learner autonomy statements.

Precision

Research question 1 asks how tutors see learner autonomy. Findings indicate that tutors see learner autonomy as non-dependence on the tutor, i.e., independence, being proactive in learning, taking responsibility for own learning outcomes and actions, considering the learning needs of self and others and being able to communicate concerns effectively. To a lesser extent, it can be extrapolated that tutors recognise differing degrees of learner autonomy. This is indicated in their limited selection of learner heteronomy statements i.e., Needing to understand before action is taken, complying with requirements, requiring affirmation of action to be confident of choices made. It can be safely concluded that tutors agree that attitudes such as having a reactive approach to learning, expecting others to be accountable when own goals are not achieved, expectation for others to provide guidance and depending on tutor guidance for all aspects of learning are clear indicators of learner heteronomy, therefore not indicative of learner autonomy.

6.4 Relevance - Learner Autonomy and HE outcomes

(Survey Qs 6,7,9,11,15)

FUNCTIONS OF HE AND LEARNER AUTONOMY (SURVEY Q6 AND 7)

Seven survey statements provided narrative data converted to numeric data, gaining tutor perspectives on the function of HE [NarNum]. The purpose of questions 6 and 7 was to find out the views of participants on the relevance of learner autonomy to the purposes of HE. Tutors views on the function of HE are presented in Figure 6.2 below.

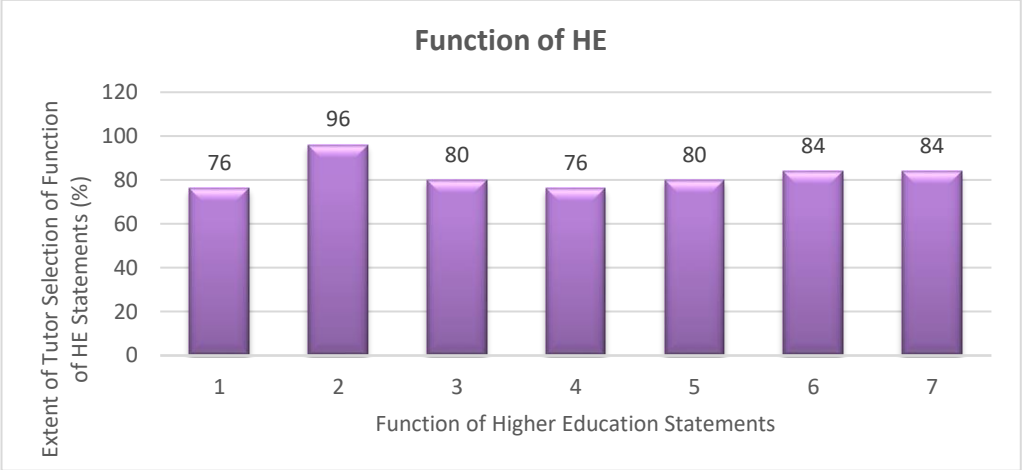

Figure 6.2 Function of HE

Key

1. Cultivating students by contributing to their personal growth
2. Contribution to knowledge through research
3. Teaching students at HE levels
4. Preparation of students for professional life
5. Development of lifelong learning attitudes among students
6. Intellectual, cultural, social, ethical and personal transformation
7. Development in students of a practical ability to apply theory through reflective thinking

Numeric data generated shows strong agreement by participants with the functions of HE with a range of 76% to 96%, with contribution to knowledge through research being the highest and cultivating students' personal growth being the lowest. The

development of learner autonomy is an aspect of personal growth, though it appears from this data to be considered less of the purpose of HE, than knowledge through research. Description and explanation of numeric [DesExpNum] data on the importance of learner autonomy to the purposes of HE in table 6.4 provides more specific data.

Overall, percentages show agreement with all the statements presented as functions of HE. The 'other' option generated some narrative data on the function of HE, as outlined in Table 6.3 below.

TABLE 6.3 NARRATIVE DATA IDENTIFYING THE FUNCTION OF HE

More on the Function of HE
1. *Foster systems for learning communities through cooperation and collaboration*
2. *Developing agency and voice*
3. *Cultivating a love of learning which influences others besides the 'student' themselves*
4. *Increasing knowledge in a specialist area*

The relevance of identifying tutor understanding of the function of HE, was to consider views of any relationship between learner autonomy and these functions. 19 respondents agreed that learner autonomy was important to the facilitation of all the statements outlining the function of HE. 6 of the 25 respondents agreed that some statements rather than all were relevant and identified which statements they considered learner autonomy related (highlighted Table 6.4). 19 agreed that learner autonomy was important for all seven statements.

TABLE 6.4- LEARNER AUTONOMY- IMPORTANCE TO THE PURPOSES OF HE

Function of HE Statements	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Number of respondents agreeing to the relevance of learner autonomy to the purposes of HE	19+2 **21** **84%**	19+ 3 **22** **88%**	19+ 0 **19** **76%**	19+2 **21** **84%**	19+5 **24** **96%**	19+4 **23** **92%**	19+4 **23** **92%**

This response indicates that in the view of the tutors, on the one hand, without learner autonomy, some of the purposes of HE are unlikely to be achieved for learners. On the other, the lowest score of 19 was for the relevance of learner autonomy to teaching

students at HE. Though 80% of the tutors agreed that teaching students was a function of HE (fig 6.3), fewer, 76% agreed that learner autonomy was important to the teaching function of HE. The disparity between the Figures 4%, is equivalent to one respondent. This highlights a limitation to having a small sample. This could indicate that within a wider population, a few tutors may not recognise the pedagogic potential in learner autonomy for teaching, or it may have no real significance.

An examination of the narrative data in Table 6.3 shows that two of the four statements indicate views of a direct link between HE and learner autonomy. From these two statements, the purpose of HE is to:

- Develop agency and voice
- Cultivate a love of learning which influences others besides the 'student' themselves

Having agency and a voice is indicative of learner autonomy, agentic learners act differently within the constraints of institutional structures or conventions (Giddens, 1984). Students cultivating a love of learning and influencing others, allies with contributing to the learning of others, which is a subcomponent tutor strategy for engaging learner autonomy within the ALC. This finding is further discussed with findings on the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

Findings Summary (Q6 and 7): A median percentage score of 88% in agreement indicates that learner autonomy is necessary to most of the purposes of HE, though for some tutors, this may not include teaching. **Precision:** RQ 1 asks how tutors see learner autonomy. Findings show that tutors view learner autonomy as necessary to achieving the purposes of HE, though more to the development of knowledge through research than to teaching. This has implications for RQ2 which asks if tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

UNIVERSITY GRADUATE AND A NON-GRADUATE (SURVEY Q9)

Of the 25 respondents to the survey, 6 agreed that learner autonomy makes a difference between a graduate and a non-graduate, and 19 disagreed. 20 of the respondents provided narrative data explaining reasons for their position. Appendix 14 presents the narrative data categorised into 'agree' and disagree. Those who agree that learner autonomy makes the difference between functioning as a graduate and functioning as a non-graduate, stated what HE 'should' do for learners through learner autonomy, rather than what it does

> learner autonomy was necessary for personal, social and emotional emancipation which H.E provides; the process of HE encourages the development of higher and critical thinking which may not be so in non-graduate contexts; autonomy provides a means for mastery which should be found in HE contexts, and undergraduates need to develop as autonomous learners (Appendix 14).

Findings Summary (Q9): Overall, it was found that in the tutors' views, learner autonomy did not necessarily make a difference between a graduate and a non-graduate, however the professional environment could restrict individual autonomy through compliance procedures. A graduate within a professional context may be able to mitigate a work culture of compliance having gained critical thinking skills. **Precision**: This finding contributes to RQ1 as tutors view learner autonomy, as a means by which graduates develop critical thinking skills.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT (SURVEY Q11)

Twenty-four out of 25 (96%) respondents, through yes/no answers, agreed that learner autonomy was important for student engagement terms of effective stimulation, challenge, engagement and active commitment to study. 22 respondents provided narrative data giving reasons for their choice (Appendix 15). Through data reduction [NarNum], 21 items of narrative data were grouped into nominal data, presented as 10

subthemes. Figure 6.3 presents the sub-themes from the narrative data on the importance of learner autonomy for student engagement.

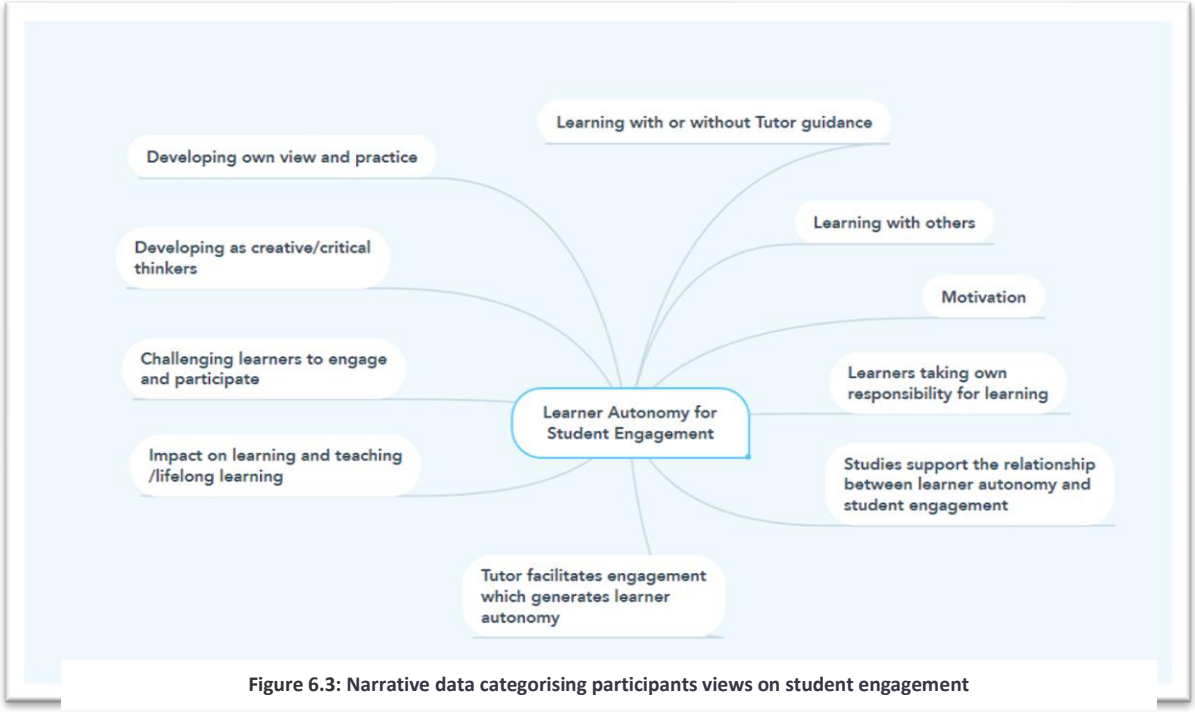

Figure 6.3: Narrative data categorising participants views on student engagement

Findings Summary (Q11): All sub-themes emerging from the narrative data here, are relevant to explaining why learner autonomy is important for student engagement. Motivation and challenging learners emerged as themes most exemplified. Thus, for students to be motivated or challenged to engage, learning tasks need to involve the exercise of learner autonomy, which in turn develops learner autonomy. This finding is in line with the psychological perspective of learner autonomy discussed in the work of Ryan and Deci (2001), Fazey and Fazey (2001) and Weinstein et al. (2012) in chapter three.

Precision: This finding contributes to RQ 2. The narrative data explaining the high rate of tutor choice – 96% on the importance of learner autonomy for student engagement, identifies motivation and challenge among other tutor practices. This indicates a recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (SURVEY Q15)

All respondents, 25 out of 25, agreed that learner autonomy is important for the development of student scholarship, research, and professional practice. 15 relevant items of explanatory narrative data were reduced to nominal data [NarNum], presented as 3 subthemes (Appendix 16). Table 6.5 illustrates subthemes arising from narrative data.

Table 6.5 -Importance of learner autonomy for Student Scholarship Research and Professional Practice

Subtheme	**Statements**
Learner autonomy necessary for research	7
Learner autonomy and professional practice	6
Student autonomy can be developed	2

Findings Summary (Q15): There is 100% agreement among the tutors that learner autonomy is important for the development of student scholarship, research and professional practice which are necessary aspects of gaining a HE qualification. From the narrative data, 7 statements assert the importance of learner autonomy for research, 6 statements assert its importance for professional practice. This extends the necessity for learner autonomy beyond the HE experience to the workplace. **Precision:** Like Q9, this finding contributes to RQ1, tutor view learner autonomy as important within HE and work contexts.

FINDINGS SUMMARY FOR 6.4- RELEVANCE OF LEARNER AUTONOMY TO HE

Summary of findings (Qs 6,7,9,11,15) indicate that tutors strongly agree that learner autonomy is relevant to HE. Learner autonomy is necessary for the purposes of HE, though teaching was selected lowest. This indicates that a minority of tutors may not see a pedagogic potential in learner autonomy. It was strongly agreed that learner autonomy was necessary for student motivation and challenge as well as the exercise of scholarship, research and professional practice.

Therefore, learner autonomy is relevant to the purposes of HE, although some may not see a role for learner autonomy in teaching, it has a role for student motivation and challenge.

Precision-These findings address both RQs 1 and RQ2. Tutors' views of what learner autonomy is i.e., necessary to the purposes of HE and the workplace, as well as, the extent to which tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Although the findings here indicate agreement with the relevance of learner autonomy to the purposes of HE, to a minor extent learner autonomy is not seen as relevant to teaching, this is counterbalanced by tutors' views of student motivation and challenge being important means by which learner engage in learning through their autonomy. To this extent, the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy is recognised implicitly but to a possibly lesser extent when directly viewed as important to teaching.

6.5 - The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy (Qs 8,10,12,13,14)

DO TUTORS PLAN FOR LEARNER AUTONOMY IN THEIR TEACHING? (SURVEY Q8)

23 out of 25 respondents (92%) agreed that they plan for learner autonomy in their teaching. All respondents provided narrative data supporting their position. Of the two respondents who do not plan for learner autonomy, one did not think planning for learner autonomy necessary stating that 'It should be expected at HE' (Participant X). The second respondent, fosters learner autonomy through her teaching style and expectations of students

> I do not consciously plan for this but consider that it is inherent in my teaching style and expectations of the students (Participant Y)

Though there was majority agreement that planning for engaging learner autonomy was necessary, the two who disagreed, represent the small proportion of tutors who expect HE learners to be autonomous and may not take deliberate steps to foster it.

The six subcomponents of the tutor aspect of the ALC, formed a means of mapping narrative data from the 23 respondents who plan for learner autonomy in their teaching practices. The 23 respondents provided 51 different statements. 37 statements could be

mapped to the 6 designed subcomponents of the ALC. 14 of the 51 statements could not be mapped and were categorised into two new subcomponents. Table 6.6 below shows how many tutor strategies came under each of the 6 subcomponents of the tutor aspect of the ALC.

TABLE 6.6 - PARTICIPANT SUPPORT STRATEGIES MAPPED TO THE 6 SUBCOMPONENTS OF THE TUTOR ASPECT OF THE ALC

ALC-Autonomy Support Strategy (Subcomponent of teaching methods)	Number of relevant participant support strategies N=51
Thinking	5
Critical Reflection	6
Independent Action	9
Decision Making	7
Considering the learning of others	0
Contributing to the learning of others	10
Uncategorised	14

TABLE 6.6 CONTINUED - 14 UNCATEGORISED PARTICIPANT SUPPORT STRATEGIES MAPPED TO 2 NEW SUBCOMPONENTS OF THE ALC

Guidance	**1. Ensuring range of opportunities for guidance and support, including university support services.** **2. Supporting the students in deciding a focus point for discussion.** **3.Guided learning / giving students ideas.** **4.Discussion of assignment.** **5.Individualised support in tutorials.** **6.Study skills advice.** **7. Scaffolding strategies in sessions.** **8. Giving a list of "Frequently Asked Questions" for the assignment.** **9. Showing students how to find their own research and how to make notes on research papers.**
Expectations	10. Encouraging wider publication of PG research. 11. Having high expectations. 12. We do not provide comprehensive reading lists. 13. Encouraged students to take responsibility for their own actions. 14. Clearly stating my expectations of them as learners.

Findings Summary Q8: 92% of tutors, consider learner autonomy in their planning using a range of strategies, from description and explanation of numeric data [DesExpNum], 73% of these strategies can be categorised under the 6 subcomponents designed in the ALC. 27% of the strategies were not considered in the design of the ALC. These have been labelled guidance and expectations. So, tutors plan for learner autonomy in their teaching, using strategies which are largely represented in the design of the tutor strategy part of the ALC.

Precision: This finding answers RQs 2 and 3. If tutors plan for learner autonomy in their teaching, this means they view it as important to the teaching and learning process. By using a range of strategies tutors inadvertently recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy (RQ2). The possibility of mapping a greater part of their strategies to the tutor strategy part of the ALC contributes to an affirmation of this part of the construct (RQ3).

LEARNER AUTONOMY SUPPORT STRATEGIES (SURVEY Q10)

The purpose of survey question 10, was to put the six tutor subcomponent aspects of the ALC to a wider audience, following the earlier face validity exercise. Respondents were asked to select what they considered to be useful autonomy support strategies from a list of 10 strategies, which included the six tutor subcomponents. Four additional strategies not currently in the ALC were added to avoid leading the respondents. Table 6.7 below illustrates participant confirmation of ALC strategy subcomponents.

TABLE 6.7 EXTENT OF SELECTION OF ALC STRATEGIES

6 ALC- Tutor Subcomponents with 4 others	**Option**	**% selected**
Critical Reflection	10a	88
Attending sessions	10b	52
Contribution to the learning of others	10c	88
Following teaching slides	10d	4
Tutorials	10e	84
Consideration of the learning of others	10f	60
Decision making	10g	80
Independent activity	10h	84
Asking questions	10i	88
Thinking tasks	10j	72

Non ALC subcomponent support strategies

Findings Summary: Description and explanation of numeric data [DesExpNum], shows that the extent of selection of percentage scores identifies the level of agreement with each of the 10 statements. All ten statements were selected by each of the 25 respondents as autonomy support strategies. As with Q5, the rate of selection was made to differing degrees and the median percentage score was calculated.

The median percentage score for school wide selection of ALC tutor subcomponents:

4, 52, 60, 72, 80 84, 84, 88, 88,88. Mean of 80 and 84 = 82. Median score 82%.

Of the ALC tutor subcomponents, 'consideration of the learning of others' and thinking had scores below the median percentage score. Thus 'consideration of the learning of others' and thinking are viewed by fewer tutors as a means of engaging learner autonomy. There was agreement by tutors, that at least five of the ALC subcomponents are likely to engage learner autonomy. Of the non ALC strategies introduced to avoid leading the respondents, 'asking questions' and 'tutorials' received scores above the median. Selection of these indicates that tutor strategies for learner autonomy are not limited to the six proposed in this study. These will be considered for further discussion alongside guidance and tutor expectations from finding from the previous question (Q8).

Precision: this finding contributes to RQ3 with a more nuanced affirmation of the tutor elements of the ALC. The lowest ALC subcomponent score for 'consideration of the learning of others' as a means of engaging learner autonomy, is corroborated by the face validity exercise where this subcomponent had the lowest score for its autonomy support potential. Thinking also had a low score although scored higher on the pilot. Scores for the other four tutor subcomponents, contributes to confirmation the feasibility of four of the six elements of the ALC, at this point.

LEARNER AUTONOMY AND RIGOUR AND STRETCH (Q12)

Twenty four out of 25 (96%) respondents agreed that Learner autonomy was important for rigour and stretch in teaching and learning in HE, to develop independence, skills, knowledge and understanding that enables the development of full student potential. Following analysis and description of narrative data [AnaDesNar], 18 respondents

provided reasons for their view (Appendix 17). Table 6.8 below presents common sub themes arising from narrative data on the importance of learner autonomy for rigour and stretch in teaching quality.

TABLE 6.8 IMPORTANCE OF LEARNER AUTONOMY FOR RIGOUR AND STRETCH

Theme	Tally
Personal Development	2
Decision making reflection and investigation at level 7/8	1
Rigour and stretch are normal expectations of learning	1
Willingness to be stretched	1
Independent thought challenging dominant discourse constructing new knowledge	4
Independent goal achievement	7
Future Planning	2

There are 2 sub themes with higher recurrence of narrative data- 1) Learner autonomy is needed for the construction of new knowledge and 2) to achieve independent goals.

Findings Summary: Learner autonomy is needed for students to carry out rigorous tasks provided by tutors which stretch their capabilities. This is corroborated by findings in Q11 where challenge was identified from narrative data, as a means by which learners engage autonomously. **Precision:** This finding contributes to a recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in response to RQ2

LEARNER AUTONOMY AND TUTOR FEEDBACK (Q13)

Twenty three out of 25 respondents (92%) agreed that Learner autonomy is important to student action on tutor feedback which supports students' development, progress and attainment. Table 6.9 outlines sub themes derived from narrative data. 17 respondents provided reasons for their view (Appendix 18).

TABLE 6.9 -IMPORTANCE OF LEARNER AUTONOMY FOR STUDENT ACTION ON TUTOR FEEDBACK

Sub themes from narrative data giving reasons for the importance of learner autonomy for tutor feedback in H.E. teaching quality

Theme	Tally
Taking responsibility for own learning	2
Student engagement	2
Feedback should develop learner autonomy	6
Proactive action on feedback is indicative of learner autonomy	6

Findings Summary: Analysis of narrative data confirms tutor views of the efficacy of tutor feedback in developing learner autonomy, as well as the importance of learner autonomy for students to act on feedback given by tutor to improve their learning. **Precision:** This finding contributes to a recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in response to RQ2.

INDEPENDENT RESEARCH SKILLS USING PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL RESOURCES (Q14)

Twenty four out of 25 respondents (96%) agreed that learner autonomy is important for independent research skills, using physical and digital resources. 17 respondents provided reasons for their view (Appendix 19). Table 6.10 illustrates sub themes arising from narrative data, 3 responses were uncategorised.

TABLE 6.10 -IMPORTANCE OF LEARNER AUTONOMY FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH SKILLS USING PHYSICAL AND DIGITAL RESOURCES

Theme	Tally
Learner autonomy necessary for research	5
Independent learning skills	5
Student autonomy can be developed	4

Findings Summary: findings here underlie the possibility of developing learner autonomy, as well as exemplify the importance of learner autonomy for the use of resources in independent research.

Precision: this acknowledges the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in response to RQ2.

Summary of findings for 6.5- Pedagogic potential of learner autonomy

Findings indicate that tutors strongly agree that the learner autonomy has a pedagogic potential. Most tutors plan for learner autonomy using a range of strategies. There are indications that some tutors agree that learner autonomy can be developed. Table 6.11 summarises overall sub themes arising within this section.

TABLE 6.11 – SUB THEMES ARISING FROM THE NARRATIVE DATA ON THE PEDAGOGIC POTENTIAL OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

Pedagogic potential of opportunities through learner autonomy	**Outcomes**
Developing as creative/critical thinkers	Independent learning skills Independent thought challenging dominant discourse, constructing new knowledge
Learning with others	Learner autonomy and professional practice Student engagement,
Willingness to be stretched, Rigour and stretch are normal expectations of learning	Learner autonomy for research
Motivation, Decision making, reflection and investigation	Learners taking own responsibility for learning
Challenging learners to engage and participate, Tutor facilitates engagement which generates learner autonomy	Independent goal achievement
Student autonomy can be developed, Feedback should develop learner autonomy Personal Development, Future Planning, Developing own view and practice, Impact on learning and teaching /lifelong learning	proactive action on feedback

Tutors agreed with the tutor and student evaluative elements of the ALC, although consideration of the learning of others as a means of engaging learner autonomy had the least selection.

Precision- RQ2 looks at the extent to which tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. RQ 3 looks at the extent to which tutors agree with the elements of the ALC. Findings for the questions relating to the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy indicate that tutors do recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy and they agree with the likelihood that the elements of the ALC could foster and evaluate learner autonomy.

6.6 Conclusion

In terms of **identifying what learner autonomy is**, the degrees of learner autonomy as argued in this study were confirmed by tutor selection in Q5. There was a divide in the selection of learner autonomy and learner heteronomy statements. Learner autonomy statements were all those selected above the median percentage score. One statement 'Knowing when to ask for guidance' designed as indicative of learner heteronomy was strongly selected as indicative of learner autonomy at 92%. This supports the notion of autonomous dependence and will be considered an indicator of learner autonomy, contrary to the researcher's initial assumption.

Findings of tutor views on relevance of learner autonomy and HE, showed strong agreement that tutors considered learner autonomy important to the purposes of HE and to student outcomes as graduates. Although, the lowest score was on the relevance of learner autonomy to teaching, which may have some implication for tutors recognising the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Learner autonomy was not agreed as a sole preserve of graduates, as non-graduates also develop learner autonomy in professional practice. However, graduates may find in their autonomy a means of mitigating the compliance structure of some professional environments, through their ability to critically reflect. There was strong agreement that learner autonomy was important for student engagement. This corroborates the discussion of the HEI policy on student engagement as key means of enabling learner autonomy discussed in Chapter

Two. There was full agreement that learner autonomy was needed for the necessary HE practices of research, scholarship, and professional practice.

Findings from responses **on the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy** revealed that most tutors plan for learner autonomy in their teaching. Where there is planning for learner autonomy, there is a recognition of its pedagogic potential. Respondents supplied a range of strategies they use to engage learner autonomy. Majority of these could be mapped against the tutor subcomponent aspects of the ALC, (Table 6.6).Strategies which could not be mapped (Uncategorised) were indicative of support and challenge (Appendix 20). These will be considered in reviewing the subcomponents of the ALC in the discussion. Considering the learning of others was the only subcomponent that had zero mapping against tutors' own strategies. Two non-ALC strategies were also selected- asking questions and tutorials. It is interesting to note that tutorials are a forum for asking questions, and where students receive support. This will be discussed further in reviewing the ALC in Chapter Nine.

There was evidence that some tutors may not recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. As discussed above, the lowest score on the functions of a university education was on the relevance of learner autonomy to teaching.

Furthermore, in addition to examining tutors' own practices for engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, respondents confirmed the feasibility of the tutor subcomponents of the ALC. Four subcomponents were selected with percentages above the median indicating strong agreement. Considering the learning of others had the lowest selection of the ALC strategies under Q10, as well as zero mapping with existing tutor strategies for learner autonomy. Evidence of tutor recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy was further realised in strong agreement by tutors with the importance of learner autonomy for rigour and stretch, student action on tutor feedback and the use of physical and digital resources for research.

Tutor agreement with the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy was further evidenced in the sub themes arising from the narrative data from questions 11 to 15.

Four main findings emerge from the survey. 1) tutors considered learner autonomy important to the purposes of HE and to student outcomes as graduates, 2) four of the six subcomponents of the ALC exemplify ways in which tutors engage learner autonomy, 3) Four tutor strategies not considered in the design of the ALC are -guidance, tutor expectations, asking questions and tutorials, summarised as - support and challenge, 4) Learner autonomy is important to teaching quality.

The next chapter continues the themes of identification, relevance to HE and the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy with analysis of data and findings from the tutor task.

Chapter Seven- Analysis and Findings Tutor Task

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on findings from the tutor task, which are synthesised with those from the survey and interviews, into the main study findings in Chapter Nine.

The tutor task involved a trial of the ALC in real teaching sessions, thus tutor task data will address the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy to a greater extent than the other two themes. Tutors recorded outcomes from engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in practice. This involves considering learner autonomy in planning, providing tasks that require learner autonomy, and evaluating the degree to which learners respond autonomously. Data was gathered through activity templates and tutor reflection.

Aside from its introduction and conclusion, this chapter is in five sections. 7.2 presents findings from the sampling procedure for the tutor task, which provide detail for a more accurate analysis and description of data [AnaDesNar] derived from the tutor task. 7.3 to 7.6 present findings from individual tutors, explaining who the tutor is, what they did, task data, and their reflection on using the ALC. The three themes continue through to the tutor task to maintain consistency in analysis.

The Deconstruction Process

In addition to analysis and description of narrative data, interpretation and deconstruction was used to examine where indications for further exploration are found. Deconstruction in data analysis provides a means of attaining a rigorous interpretation of narrative data. It critically engages the social construction of reality in narratives and discourse, with a view to exposing hegemonic assumptions, privileging, paradoxes, ambiguity, or a deeper perspective which the speaker may not be immediately aware of, or may seek to supress (Barry, 2017); in summary, it is a tool for

exposing inconsistencies and testing the credibility of narrative data. Deconstruction is used where necessary, following interpretation of narrative data in this and the next two chapters on data analysis.

Ideas from Roseneu (1992) and Barry (2017) on the process of deconstruction of literary texts have been adapted and applied in this study to the critical analysis of narrative data. This is a valid application, critical thinkers on deconstruction e.g., Johnson, highlights deconstruction as etymologically closer to analysis

> Deconstruction is … much closer to the original meaning of the word 'analysis', which etymologically means 'to undo'… the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text. (Johnson, 1980 p.5)

The process of deconstruction as a means of analysing narrative data adapted in this study, involves two steps:

1. Ascertaining the format of the narrative data when collected from the participant- was it written by the participant or provided verbally and then transcribed into written form?

Recognising the format of narrative data as provided by the participant is important for the validity of findings from deconstruction, as writing allows for reflection to a greater extent than speaking. Thus, the way the participant's response is influenced by hidden assumptions, beliefs, values etc is likely to be different for data gathered from what participants say than what they write. This has implications for interviews, where a third party is involved in the transcription of verbal narratives, since deconstruction takes place on written texts. For this reason, a precise, verbatim transcription of interviews with no adjustments by the transcriber were used in this study.

2. Analysing the narrative at three levels: verbal, textual and linguistic (Barry, 2017).

Deconstruction at a verbal level consists of identifying paradoxes and contradictions in words, phrases or sentences which may be further analysed logically for possible

interpretation or exposure of hidden meaning. At textual level, the whole of a participant's response is examined to identify where there may be a break or disunity e.g., in the point or view expressed or area of focus. At linguistic level, the trustworthiness of the use of language is analysed for issues such as exaggeration, deflation, or misrepresentation.

Narrative data in this study is both written and verbal and gathered in response to questions asked during the survey, as well as the interview following the tutor task. Narrative data provided without direct questioning is in the form of a short reflection at the end of the tutor task. For this reason, 'texts' are short narratives which have limited scope for textual and linguistic deconstruction explained above. In view of this, verbal deconstruction was the main mode for deeper analysis of narrative data, indicated using square brackets i.e., [Deconstruction].

Tutor Task Participants

Of eight consenting tutors, two withdrew through ill health, six engaged in interviews (see Chapter Nine) and four provided data from the tutor task. Findings from the tutor task are presented from each tutor in order richness and thickness (Dibley, 2011) of data provided, there is no intention to generalise, thus the small number here is not detrimental. Rather, findings from these four tutors are detailed enough to add to the analysis of data informing the feasibility of the ALC. This data will be integrated with data from 25 survey participants and six interview participants to answer the research questions. Thus, the reduced sample size of four at this point does not undermine rigour for data analysis and findings (Marshall, 1996).

7.2 Findings from Sampling for the tutor task

Section 5.3 of chapter five explained the data collection procedure for the tutor task which commenced with drawing up samples by the researcher. Student samples were drawn using observation of their degrees of learner autonomy. Initial

observations revealed the difficulty of ascertaining degrees of autonomy, purely by external observation, furthermore, it emerged that there were two types of student cohort participating in the tutor task - familiar and unfamiliar. Familiar cohorts were those the researcher or the tutor had taught before, therefore, may have had some previous knowledge of the degree of the learners' autonomy. Unfamiliar cohorts were those not known to either the researcher, the tutor or both.

Previous knowledge of the cohorts was both a limitation and a strength. On the one hand, it could introduce bias on the part of the observer. Thus, tutors might have used their previous knowledge of the student rather than the descriptors provided for each degree of autonomy (Appendices 9 and 11). On the other hand, previous knowledge of cohorts helped make accurate judgements through observation, as evaluation solely on a short period of observation was challenging and likely to be inaccurate. Thus, the descriptors confirm what the tutor already knows about the learner's autonomous responses. An added benefit was that judgements made of familiar groups, provided a means of comparison with judgements made from observations of unfamiliar groups. This gave an indication of how accurate, descriptions of the degrees of autonomy in the ALC were, therefore, how useful they were likely to be for tutor evaluation of learner autonomy.

Eight cohorts were observed by the researcher. Table 7.2 below shows the pre-knowledge of student groups by tutors and researcher, whether data was available at the end of the tutor task and tutor availability for interview.

TABLE 7.2 PRE-KNOWLEDGE OF THE TUTORS AND RESEARCHER OF CONSENTING STUDENTS AND DATA AVAILABILITY

Group	**Researcher**	**Tutor**	**Task data**	**Interview**
Tutor 1	Unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Yes	Yes
Tutor 2	Familiar	Familiar	No	Yes
Tutor 3	Familiar	Unfamiliar	Yes	Yes
Tutor 4	Familiar	Unfamiliar	No	Yes
Tutor 5	Unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Yes	Yes
Tutor 6	Unfamiliar	Unfamiliar	Yes	Yes
Tutor 7	Unfamiliar	Familiar	No	No
Tutor 8	Familiar	Unfamiliar	No	No

Having observed one unfamiliar group as a trial run, an observation criteria sheet was drawn up by the researcher, to aid observation of other unfamiliar groups (Appendix 8). This subdivided existing descriptions of the degrees of autonomy, into further observable behaviours. The additional observation criteria sheet was not made available to participant tutors, as they had already been provided a guidance sheet, a checklist and two templates. It was considered that more criteria may have proven counterproductive. In addition, their role as observer was a full participant role (Plowright, 2011), thus, they were closer to the subjects of observation and had more opportunities than the researcher to make observations for longer periods.

Appendix 8 shows the additional observation criteria, alongside descriptors of degrees of autonomy, devised during observation for sampling by the researcher. The additional observation criteria were modelled on behaviours of students in cohorts the researcher was familiar with. Tutors had the descriptors of degrees of autonomy only.

Three reminders, first the degrees of learner autonomy are, A) Autonomous, AD) Autonomous Dependent, H) Heteronomous, HI) Heteronomous Independent. Second, as explained in Chapter Five, the samples provided to the tutors were double blind. Consenting students were not sure if they had been selected for the sample, and tutors did not know which degree of autonomy, the researcher had

allocated to each student on the sample. Third, the purpose of the tutor task was to investgate the feasibility of the ALC in practice, i.e does it do what it is designed to do?

1) Does it draw the tutor's attention to learner autonomy when planning for teaching sessions?
2) Does it provide methods that tutors can use both for delivering content and engaging a learner's autonomy?
3) Does it provide a means by which tutors can evaluate degrees of autonomy in learner responses?

Findings from the tutor tasks and interviews are presented in order of richness of data, to assist with data saturation, reached when there is no new data, or themes, and the researcher is able at that point to replicate the study (Guest et al., 2006).

Tutors had four steps to follow after receiving a sample. First, they would observe the students carry out a task, based on any of the six subcomponents of the tutor strategy part of the ALC, and analyse the degree of autonomy with which each student responded. This is the 'first impressions' observation. The purpose is to familarise the tutor with practical issues with evaluating the degrees of autonomy, including what to observe and what the degree of autonomy statements are. The second and third steps are similar, tutors provide students with a task based on at least two teaching subcomponents of the ALC, then observe the student response, evaluating this response by using the descriptors of degrees of learner autonomy. The fourth step was for the tutor to complete a short reflection on their experience of using the ALC, within a short period of completing the observation, and send this to the researcher preferably by email.

Findings Summary: It was found that to successfully observe degrees of autonomy, more specific observation criteria is needed alongside the descriptors of degrees of learner autonomy, especially where students were unfamiliar to the observer. Observation criteria consists of observable actions mapped to the degree of

autonomy descriptors, with which an observer may make assessments of a learner's degree of autonomy.

Precision: This finding addresses RQs 2 and 3. For RQ2, to evaluate the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, there needs to be a clear means of observation, of knowing what to look for, and how what is observed is interpreted in relation to learner autonomy. For RQ3, being able in practice to interpret learner behaviour, within observable criteria for the degrees of learner autonomy, affirms the tutor evaluative part of the ALC.

7.3 Findings from Tasks- Tutor 3

Background- Tutor 3 was one of the female participants, falling within the 4 – 7 years range of HE experience across a number of Stuch programmes. Tutor 3 completed all four steps of the tutor task. She taught her group on the Independent Study module, a level 5, second year module through which students carry out small-scale research projects towards the end of their second year of study. Tutor 3 provided her students with four tasks, which was one more than requested. Except for the 'first impressions' task, Tutor 3 followed up each task with a brief reflection on her experience of using the ALC to engage learner autonomy. Data provided included data on 'first impressions' with which the tutor was able to familarise self with the degree of autonomy descriptors. Following this, degrees of autonomy of students on the sample were assessed on three tasks. The extra task provided additonal valuable data . Tutor 3 provided a short reflection at the end of each activity.

Sample

The double blind sample provided, was familiar to the researcher and unfamilar to Tutor 3. Table 7.3 shows the degree of learner autonomy evaluations made by the researcher for this sample.

TABLE 7.3 DOUBLE BLIND SAMPLE FOR TUTOR 3

Researcher Sample- Familiar

	Autonomous	Autonomous Dependent	Heteronomous	Heteronomous Independent
Student A			X	
Student B				X
Student C			X	
Student D				X
Student E		X		
Student F		X		
Student G	X			
Student H	X			

Having received the double blind sample, Tutor 3 set her first impressions task.

Task 1- first impressions

For Task 1, her 'first impressions task', the group engaged in a pre-set reading and fedback during the session. Being the introductory task, tutor 3 familiarised herself with the degrees of autonomy part of the ALC, there was no need for reflection at this stage (Table 7.4).

TABLE 7.4 FIRST IMPRESSION ASSESSMENT TUTOR 3

	Autonomous	Autonomous Dependent	Heteronomous	Heteronomous Independent
Student A			**x**	
Student B				**X**
Student C			**x**	
Student D				**X**
Student E				**X**
Student F				**X**
Student G				**X**
Student H				X

Table 7.4 shows the outcomes of Tutor 3 observations of degrees of autonomy on the first impressions task. The students had been given a pre-set reading, they were to feed back to the group on their understanding/views of the reading. The tutor observations evaluated the sample as heteronomous or heteronomous independent. There were no evaluations of autonomous or autonomnous dependence. This may be due to tutor unfamilarity with the construct. Another explanation may be what was going on at the time of observation, as further on, the tutor found that her style of teaching changed to include more activities, thus the students may have demonstrated more observable behaviours. The purpose of the 'first impressions' task was to familarise the tutor with the ALC, the evaluations made on Table 7.4 are seen as trial rather than actual data on the use of the ALC.

Task 2

First impressions was followed by task 2. Tutor strategy subcomponenets of the ALC involved here, were independent action and contributing to the learning of others. Tutor 3 asked her students to

> … compose and draft a consent letter to conduct your Independent Study ethically.… read and interpret BERA (2011) guidelines [provided] during two previous seminars.

Tutor 3 provided further contextual information by stating that

> Students have experience of deciding whether to sign the consent letter as potential participant[s] in PhD research conducted by…tutor. Students will be able to discuss and share ideas during the process. The tutor has prepared an exemplar and will share this with the group when everyone contributes to feedback discussion to evaluate.

For task two, Tutor 3 evaluated the student sample across all four degrees of learner autonomy (Table 7.5).

TABLE 7.5- TUTOR 3 ASSESSMENT OF LEARNER AUTONOMY ON TASK 2 USING THE ALC

Activity 2	**Autonomous**	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A				**x**
Student B- absent x				
Student C			**X**	
Student D				**x**
Student E		**X**		
Student F	**X**			
Student G	**X**			
Student H	**X**			

On completion of the task, Tutor 3 reflected that

> All students worked collaboratively. Tutor needs to check with the students in the H and HI categories (greater tutor instruction/confirmation needed) had in fact read the BERA (2011) guidelines.

This indicates that the tutor was gradually gaining an understanding of how to use the ALC, and through evaluations of degrees of learner autonomy, could make judgements on levels of student autonomy in completing the task. Use of the ALC also directed the tutor towards students who needed more of her attention.

Task 3

For task three, Tutor 3 selected tutor strategy subcomponents – Decision making, independent action, contributing to the learning of others.

Students were required by Tutor 3 to

> Conduct a pilot study to test your draft questions for the data collection tools you intend to use. Namely: questionnaires and all forms of interview. If you are conducting an observation, share your proposed observation technique with at least two fellow students to critique your plan.

Table 7.6 presents Tutor 3 evaluation for task 3

TABLE 7.6- TUTOR 3 EVALUATION OF DEGREES OF LEARNER AUTONOMY FOR TASK 3

Activity 3	**Autonomous**	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A				x
Student B		X		
Student C		X		
Student D		X		
Student E- absent x				
Student F	X			
Student G	X			
Student H	X			

Tutor 3 reflection on activity three, reveals a broader effect of using the ALC , beyond fostering and evaluating learner autonomy:

> Generally, student sample is showing increased confidence as the module progresses. This is likely to be because tutor is reducing use of Power Point slides and increasing proportion of time on activities. Activities are directly linked to WRT [*Work based Research Tasks]* and Methodology. The activities give all students the opportunity to work independently and collaboratively. (Tutor 3)

The tutor increased the use of activities rather than rely on slides for teaching. By the end of activity three, only one of the students present during the session is coded H. Narrative data here evidences the potential of the ALC not only to foster and assess learner autonomy by external observation, but also to encourage tutors to plan for active learning (Fink, 2013).

Task 4

For Task four, Tutor 3 selected tutor strategy subcomponents – Thinking, critical reflection and contributing to the learning of others.

TABLE 7.7- TUTOR 3 EVALUATION OF DEGREES OF LEARNER AUTONOMY FOR TASK 4

Activity 4	**Autonomous**	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A			x	
Student B		X		
Student C		X		
Student D		X		
Student E		X		
Student F		X		
Student G		X		
Student H- absent				

The tutor's reflection on her fourth activity uncovers a limitation of assessing individual learner autonomy by external observation during group work:

> It was hard to make a judgement about individual students because this activity was wholly collaborative. The students worked in groups of three. Four groups in total. Three out of the four groups worked on the task without any further explanation. The fourth group needed the tutor to write down prompts and key words for them to respond to. Student C and student D were both in the group that needed additional tutor input. (Tutor 3)

Up to this point, students C and D were mostly assessed as H or HI, however the whole group was coded AD. Collaborative learning tasks are a shared experience, whereas learner autonomy is individual, albeit with social aspects. With evaluation of autonomy during team work, it may be more expedient to externally observe the autonomy of the

team rather than the indivudual, as the tutor has done in this instance, unless explicit individual responses which can be externally observed and assessed are presented.

Findings Summary - It is evident that as the tasks progressed, data became more spread across the degrees of autonomy. For the tutor strategy part of the ALC, tutor strategy subcomponents involved were task 2, Independent action and contributing to the learning of others, task 3 - Independent action, decision making and contributing to the learning of others, and task 4 thinking, critical reflection and contributing to the learning of others. Thus, in practice these five subcomponenets of the ALC were meaningful to tutor.

For the degrees of learner autonomy part of the ALC, the group were familiar to the researcher. This means the researcher had relied on more than the instance of observation, when evaluating consenting students' degrees of autonomy. However, the group were unfamilar to the tutor, and the sample was double blind, so the tutor relied purely on the students' responses in situ, to make her evaluations using the learner autonomy descriptors I.e., the student part of the ALC.

Table 7.8 presents an overall summary of Tutor 3's degree of learner autonomy observations, compared with the researcher observations . The table presents degrees of learner autonomy evaluated for each student starting with the research sample followed by each of the tutor tasks. The code summary at the end gives a visual of the consistency of evaluations, for example Student A, **H H** HI HI H means the researcher observed that the student displayed a Heteronomous response when drawing up the sample for the tutor. The tutors were unaware of the evaluations of learner autonomy made by the researcher, so Tutor 3 would not have known that Student A had been evaluated as Heteronomous. A heteronomous response was also observed by Tutor 3 duirng the trial task (task one), for tasks two and three, a heteronomous independent response was observed by the tutor, and for task four the tutor observed a heteronomous response. This indicates that the degrees of learner autonomy designed within the ALC mean something to Tutor 3. She was able to use them to interprete students' responses to the tasks she set, and identify the degree to which they were auotnomous.

TABLE 7.8: CODES DEPICTING EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS OF DEGREES OF LEARNER AUTONOMY- TUTOR 3

Student	**Researcher Sample**	**First Impression Task one**	**Task Two**	**Task Three**	**Task Four**	**Code Summary**
Student A	**H**	**H**	HI	HI	H	**H H** HI HI H
Student B	**HI**	**HI**	_	AD	AD	**HI HI** - AD AD
Student C	**H**	**H**	H	AD	AD	**H H** H AD AD
Student D	**HI**	**HI**	HI	AD	AD	**HI HI** HI AD AD
Student E	**AD**	**HI**	AD	-	AD	**AD HI** AD - AD
Student F	**AD**	**HI**	A	A	AD	**AD HI** A A AD
Student G	**A**	**HI**	A	A	AD	**A HI** A A AD
Student H	**A**	**HI**	A	A	_	**A HI** A A -

Key: A- Autonomous; AD- Autonomous Dependent; H- Heteronomous; HI- Heteronomous Independent.

It is evident that with the first assessment following the sample, i.e codes in green, the tutor was familarisng herself with the construct. There appears to be more consisitency with the evaluation of the degrees of autonomy than with degrees of heteronomy. For five out of eight evaluations (Students A,E, F, G and H) there is more agreement with the sample (researcher familiar). Another explanation in the difference in codes, could be the dynamic of degrees of learner autonomy. Some learners are more autonomous on certain tasks than others depending on a number of factors including motivation and cognitive abiility (Benson, 2013).

For task 2, Tutor 3 had three out of seven sample students in the H/HI categories. On reflection, the tutor notes that these students required more guidance or confirmation, despite being directed to familarise themselves with the knowledge required for the task on a previous occasion. Students coded 'H' required 'greater instruction' as they had either not carried out the preparatory task, or had done so without understanding the requirements. Those requiring confirmation i.e., 'HI' knew what to do, but needed confirmation to be confident they have made the right choices. Use of the ALC had directed the tutor towards students who needed more of her attention.

Tasks 3 and 4 demonsrated challenges with evaluating learner autonomy through observation during collaborative tasks. Two of the three students evaluated as

heteronomous are evaluated in relation to the group response rather than as individuals. Although one student (student A), maintained an observable heteronomous response throughout.

Precision- This finding addresses RQs 2 and 3. For RQ2, the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy is recognised through the tutor noticing a change the delivery of her style, moving from a focus on presentation slides to activities that require an exercise of learner autonomy. Further evidence of the pedagogic potential came from the tutor directing her attention to specific students having evaluated their degree of autonomy, and from the three groups who were able to exercise their autonomy and get on with the task rather than require tutor input. For RQ3, it was apparent that the change in the tutor style came with use of the ALC. The change was realised rather than planned, moreover, the tutor subcomponents guided the tutor tasks, and the degrees of learner autonomy were used in a meaningful way, with the tutor reflecting on how to observe individual autonomy within collaborative activity. This affirms the elements of the ALC in practice.

7.4 Findings Tasks - Tutor 1

Background- Tutor 1 was one of the female participants falling within the 1 – 4 years range of HE experience, new to the Stuch programmes. Tutor 1 completed three of the four steps of the tutor task, missing out step 2- which was the 'first impressions observation' included to familiarise the tutor with the degree of autonomy descriptors. She taught her group on the Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties module, a level 4, first year module through which students make a booklet for parents and write a reflective essay on an aspect of the booklet. Tutor 1 provided her students with two tasks, which was one less than requested. Tutor 1 data includes observations of degrees of autonomy from two teaching tasks and a short overall reflection, the 'first impressions' task was omitted.

Sample

The double blind sample provided was unfamiliar to the researcher and unfamilar to Tutor 1. Table 7.9 shows learner autonomy evaluations made by the researcher for this unfamilar sample.

TABLE 7.9 DOUBLE BLIND SAMPLE ASSESSED BY RESEARCHER FOR TUTOR 1

Researcher Sample unfamiliar	Autonomous	Autonomous Dependent	Heteronomous	Heteronomous Independent
Student A		X		
Student B			X	
Student C				X
Student D				X
Student E	X			
Student F	X			
Student G		X		
Student H			X	

Tutor 1 set two tasks, each with a focus on one tutor autonomy support subcomponent. The subcomponents involved were Crtical reflection and Thinking. Appendix 21 shows the outcomes of Tutor 1 observations of degrees of autonomy on both tasks.

Task 1

For Task 1, the group engaged in a thinking task. Students were asked to design a word cloud for the phrase 'school ethos' . Table 7.10 provides a record of Tutor 1 observations of degrees of autonomy for task 1.

TABLE 7.10 TUTOR 1 TASK 1 -THINKING

Students	**Autonomous**	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A			x	
Student B			x	
Student C				X
Student D		X		
Student E			x	
Student F			x	
Student G			x	
Student H			x	

Tutor 1 had no evaluations of full autonomy for this task. Most of the sample was evaluated as heteronomous. This may be due to the task being an ICT task, where students may not be used to making word clouds, or intutively working out unfamilar software, they may have needed direction or input from the tutor.

Task 2

For task 2, Tutor 2 asked her students to engage in critical reflection on a reading. Students were to read and critically analyse an article.

TABLE 7.11 TUTOR 1 TASK 2 - CRITICAL REFLECTION

Please place the student using a tick √	**Autonomous**	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A				X
Student B			x	
Student C			x	
Student D	X			
Student E		x		
Student F			x	
Student G			x	
Student H			x	

As with task 1, the majority of the students were evaluated as giving a heteronomous response. Table 7.12 below presents an overall summary of Tutor 1's degree of learner autonomy observations, compared with the researcher observations .

TABLE 7.12 CODES DEPICTING EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY TUTOR 1

Student	Researcher Sample assessment	First impression Tutor	Activity one	Activity two	Codes
Student A	**AD**	-	H	HI	**AD** H HI
Student B	**H**	-	H	H	**H** H H
Student C	**HI**	-	HI	H	**HI** HI H
Student D	**HI**	-	AD	A	**HI** AD A
Student E	**A**	-	H	AD	**A** H AD
Student F	**A**	-	H	H	**A** H H
Student G	**AD**	-	H	H	**AD** H H
Student H	**H**	-	H	H	**H** H H

Key: A- Autonomous; AD- Autonomous Dependent; H- Heteronomous; HI- Heteronomous Independent.

The possibility of tutor 1 being able to generate these codes, indicates that as with Tutor 3, she found the degrees of learner autonomy within the ALC, a means by which she could evaluate the students' responses to the tasks. In this instance, the tutor's observations of heteronomous actions appear to be more consistent than autonomous ones. Being a double blind sample, Tutor one was not aware of how the researcher had assessed the students' degrees of autonomy. The consistency in coding of both Students B and H by both researcher and tutor could be by chance, or it could be that observations of heteronomous actions in this instance, are more externally observable than other degrees of learner autonomy.

Tutor 1 provided a reflection on her experience of participating in the Tutor Task.

Tutor 1 reflection on tutor task

[Deconstruction]

> I have very much enjoyed participating in this study to this point. It has made me think of specific activities, which I previously would have probably taken for granted. (Tutor 1)

Using the ALC made Tutor 1 think of content like Tutor 3, rather than 'take for granted', indicative of implicitness. It is assumed that here, Tutor 1 is referring to session planning, thus, she found that she made more than usual emphasis, on considering the purpose of the tasks she would give to the students.

> Group dynamics play an important part in deciding which activities to undertake when it comes to learner autonomy and I tend to rely on experience and the general "feel of the group" when motivating students to learn. (Tutor 1)

Tutor 1 appears to conflate motivating students to learn, with giving opportunities for learner autonomy within teaching sessions. Although, as found in the review of literature, there is a relationship between motivation and autonomy. Experience and

'feel of the group' may have a place, however, more is needed to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. For example, the student response 'telling' the tutor what to keep and what to change, runs counter to the development of learner autonomy. There is a privileging of assumptions of what students want over what the tutor does. This analysis is confirmed in the next part of Tutor 1 reflection

> It is understood that some students are more vocal than others and it is generally the ones that show no reaction that you keep thinking of. You are constantly making sure you meet their needs and hope for a good evaluation following completion of a module! (Tutor 1)

Aiming to constantly meet student needs or seeing the role of module evaluation as an assessment of the tutor rather than the module, has implications for the recognition and engagement of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. There is the possibility of fostering learner heteronomy (which is not the aim), this may become compounded by the tutor's desire to get a favourable evaluation. Furthermore, Tutor 1 seemed to assume an advantage to being autonomous and a disadvantage to being heteronomous as the next part of her reflection indicates

> When evaluating the students, it certainly wasn't easy. Categorising a learner into one category was hard because as humans we all have our good and bad days and what one might think they are 'seeing' may not always be the case. (Tutor 1)

it is assumed that the 'bad day'categorisations of learner autonomy could be the heteronomous categories and the 'good day ones, autonomous. Tutor 1's reflection, highlights the importance of recognising movement between degrees of autonomy. The evaluations change as the students display different levels of autonomy,. Reasons for change could be to do with the individual, the task or both. The final part of Tutor 1's reflection, demonstrates why tutors need to have a clearer understanding of the nature of learner autonomy and its pedagogic potential

> Ultimately it is the learner who develops a capacity for recognizing which strategies they need to help them succeed. It is the tutor's responsibility to ensure students reach their full potential when learning.

Here there is another conflation, this time between learner autonomy and success. Development as autonomous learners may indeed contribute to a student's success but there are other factors involved. The view of the tutor's role in enabling students attain their potential, is an important outcome of the deconstruction of this text. The view privileges the remit, ability and role of the HE tutor as in control of learners' achievements with the potential to stifle what a learner can achieve through their own autonomous actions. In other words, if this view were true, where tutors do not take this responsibility for student potential, students have no other means of attaining their full potential.

Findings Summary: Tutor 1 task indicates the importance of there being a clear definition of what learner autonomy is and what it is not, in relation to other aspects of a learner's experience. Outcomes here also show that the ALC is useable for a new tutor, even if they have a developing understanding of learner autonomy and its pedagogic potential.

Precision: Findings for Tutor 1 respond to all the RQs. For RQ 1, it highlights the importance of a clear definition of learner autonomy, for RQ2, it shows that tutors need to understand what learner autonomy is to engage its pedagogic potential. For RQ3, the aspects of the ALC are confirmed as meaningful for a tutor even where there is a developing understanding of learner autonomy.

7.5 Findings from Tasks- Tutor 5

Background- Tutor 5 was one of the male participants falling within the 1 – 4 years range of HE experience, new as a tutor to the Stuch programme. Tutor 5 completed two of the four steps of the tutor task, missing out step 2- which was the 'first impressions

observation', and setting one task rather than two. His group were scheduled for the same module as Tutor 3, the Level 5 research module through which students carry out small-scale research projects towards the end of their second year of study. Tutor 5 provided a brief reflection on his experience of using the ALC at the end of the module. Data provided included data on degrees of autonomy of students on the sample for one task and a reflection.

This double blind sample was unfamiliar to both researcher and tutor. Table 7.13 shows the evaluations made by the researcher for this sample.

TABLE 7.13 DOUBLE BLIND SAMPLE FOR TUTOR 5

Sample Tutor 5 Unfamiliar	**Autonomous**	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A	x			
Student B	x			
Student C		x		
Student D		x		
Student E			X	
Student F			X	
Student G				X
Student H				X

The task presented to the students was to carry out a thematic analysis of two interviews. Students were to find at least three themes for further discussion. The ALC subcomponents involved were Thinking and Critical Reflection. Tutor 5 reflected on the group's response to the task

> The activity was intended to help the students 'test out' thematic analysis which was a new idea for them…I also made it clear this wasn't a test. …were practically silent for the duration of the task which was quite odd. (Tutor 5)

In comparison to Tutor 3 who was teaching the same module, the students here engaged with the task as individuals rather than collaboratively. It maybe the structuring of the task or the use of the word 'test' in 'test out' that made the students work silently without any collaboration or talk. This view is supported in the tutor's further reflection.

> … it became harder to judge autonomy as everyone appeared to be 'getting on with it'. Also, as I had given some guidance it at first suggested most would be AD. However, both Student B and Student E came up with alternative strategies to organise their work which they did effectively. (Tutor 5)

Although tutor 5 did not do the 'first impressions' observation, his reflection on the task here shows that he had a good understanding of how the ALC worked i.e., being able to predict AD based on providing guidance and being able to see the difference with the two who took initiative. This bears out further in his evaluation of HI

> Interestingly, Student D was keen to ensure she was doing the right thing and also made sure she fully completed the task (writing her key themes down) …, her asking for support appeared less of a weakness (a desire to need help) and more of a demonstration that she cared about the task and wanted to do this well. She was asking not out of incompetence but a desire to complete the task accurately and effectively which I believed was admirable. (Tutor 5)

[Deconstruction] Tutor 5's reflection here is a positive description of Student D's response. Although not ascribed to Student D, there is a suggestion that asking for support or needing help could be indicative for some, of a weakness. Also, that students could ask for help from incompetence. Using the descriptors on the ALC, encouraged the tutor to think about the student's response rather than assume what it was. This made the possibility of an implication of support being due to weakness or incompetence, explicit for Tutor 5, although he ruled this out for the student concerned. This demonstrates the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy using the ALC, in a different way. It highlights what is there, e.g., needing support due to a desire to succeed rather than what is commonly assumed, i.e., needing support due to weakness or incompetence. This also relates to the variance found in the survey as to whether knowing when to asking for help was indicative of autonomy.

It could be argued that an example of weakness or incompetence could been seen in the response of Student G who did not engage in any aspect of the task

> It was also difficult to categorise Student G as she appeared to not actually do any work and did not make any comment during the discussion either. … it was difficult to categorise her as she asked for no help but also did not engage in the activity … (Tutor 5)

Such an argument could be challenged by other factors e.g., the students thinking they were doing a test. If student G was anxious about tests, she made have reacted in the way described. Tutor 5's categorisation of her response as H was accurate.

Tutor 5's evaluation of the students' response is outlined on Table 7.14 below.

TABLE 7.14 TUTOR EVALUATION OF DEGREES OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

	Autonomous	**Autonomous Dependent**	**Heteronomous**	**Heteronomous Independent**
Student A		x		
Student B	x			
Student C		x		
Student D				x
Student E	x			
Student F Absent x				
Student G			x	
Student H	x			

It is interesting to note that student G along with all other students who consented to be observed for the study, did not know whether she had been selected for the sample. The researcher had evaluated student G as 'Heteronomnous independent' purely by observation as this cohort was unfamilar to both tutor and researcher.

Findings Summary: a single task limited the scope for examining changes to degrees of student autonomy across the sessions. Table 7.15 compares Tutor 5 evaluations to the researcher's double blind sample.

TABLE 7.15 CODES DEPICTING EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY TUTOR 5

Student	Researcher Sample assessment	Tutor first impression	Activity one	Codes
Student A	**A**	-	AD	**A** AD
Student B	**A**	-	A	**A** A
Student C	**AD**	-	AD	**AD** AD
Student D	**AD**	-	H	**AD** HI
Student E	**H**	-	A	**H** A
Student F	**H**	-	Absent	**H** -
Student G	**HI**	-	AD	**HI** H
Student H	**HI**	-	A	**HI** A

Key: A- Autonomous; AD- Autonomous Dependent; H- Heteronomous; HI- Heteronomous Independent.

Despite limited data, the basic function of the ALC which is to make learner autonomy explicit by engaging its pedagogic potential, was achieved.

Precision- This finding addresses RQs 2 and 3. For RQ2, the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy is recognised through the tutor recognising that needing support is a positive means of achieving a better outcome. For RQ3, it was apparent that the realisation the tutor made was triggered by use of the descriptors for the degrees of learner autonomy. This affirms the elements of the ALC in practice.

7.6 Findings from Tutor 6 Tasks

Background- Tutor 6 was one of the female participants falling within the 4 – 8 years range of HE experience. In addtion to her teaching workload Tutor 6 had several leadserhip responsibilities at the time of the study, which left limited opportunity for other activites e.g., research. Tutor 6 completed two of the four steps of the tutor task,

missing out step 2 the 'first impressions observation', and the reflection aspect. Her group engaged in a level five Mathematics module which was assessed by examining maths resources followed by an essay. Data provided included data on degrees of autonomy of students on the sample for two tasks. Tutor 6 did not use the learner autonomy codes, instead she provided short descriptive phrases . This data is included in these findings as it provided evidence that the ALC may be used by tutors who have additonal responsibilities and limited time, though there will be a need to be familiar with the terminology. Appendix 22 shows the descriptions on the sample sheet provided by the researcher, and Appendix 23 records how this tutor's feedback was converted into learner autonomy codes. Table 7.17 compares Tutor 6 codes on two tasks with the researcher sample.

Findings summary: the use of the ALC provided a means by which learner autonomy could be considered and evaluated

TABLE 7.17 CODES DEPICTING EXTERNAL OBSERVATIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY TUTOR 6

Student	Researcher Sample assessment Unfamilliar	First impression Tutor	Activity one	Activity two	Codes
Student A	H	-	H	H	H H H
Student B	A	-	HI	A	A HI A
Student C	AD	-	A	- (Abs)	AD A -
Student D	A	-	HI	- (Abs)	A HI -
Student E	H	-	HI	A	H HI A
Student F	HI	-	?	?	HI
Student G	AD	-	A	A	AD A A
Student H	HI	-	A	A	HI A A

Key: A- Autonomous; AD- Autonomous Dependent; H- Heteronomous; HI-Heteronomous Independent.

Precision RQ3 – the possibility of mapping the tutor's descriptions to the degrees of learner autonomy, affirms this part of the ALC in practice.

7.7 Conclusion

A consistent message that emerged from the tutor task was that planning for learner autonomy had a pedagogic potential. Planning for learner autonomy enabled tutors gauge the level of understanding students had of content during the sessions. It drew tutor attention to thinking carefully about what was to be delivered during the sessions and types of activities to include, to create the space for learners to be autonomous. It also drew tutors think about the students with whom they were unfamiliar, and the length of time needed to get to know them well enough to make evaluations. The ALC gave tutors a structure within which they could reflect on the student's response.

Furthermore, using the ALC made tutors think of the attributes of students in terms of learning, rather than make judgements about their behaviour, enabling them note the difference between those who want to be told what to do, and those who want to be stretched; those who cared about their learning. It also drew tutors to address their own assumptions about learner autonomy, as well as what they were not doing.

Planning for learner autonomy influenced how tutors taught. Tutors agreed that focusing on the tutor subcomponents when planning, made them think about strategies for learner autonomy. Tutors used from 2 to 4 subcomponents across their activities. 'Contributing to the learning of others' was used 5 times. 'Critical reflection' and 'Considering the learning of others' 3 times each. 'Thinking' was the focus twice, and 'independent action' once. 'Decision making' was not mentioned but could be inferred, although decision making was selected during the survey as a strategy for fostering learner autonomy. This gave some insight into the practicalities of using the strategies.

The next chapter presents findings from interviewing these four tutors plus a further two who participated but did not provide tutor task data.

Chapter Eight- Findings and Analyses Tutor Interviews

8.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on initial findings from the tutor interviews. These are synthesised with those from the survey and tutor task, into the overall findings in the next chapter. This chapter is in six sections. Each section presents interview data from each of the six tutors (see table 7.2). The sections present responses to interview questions grouped under the themes which have been maintained throughout the analysis of data.

Themes (see section 6.1) are repeated in Table 8.1 below. An 'other' category was created to explore data coming through the interviews that did not fall under any of the three main themes.

TABLE 8.1- PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS FROM TUTOR INTERVIEWS

Themes	**Interview Questions**
Identification - What learner autonomy is	Interview Questions 3 and 5
Relevance to HE	Interview Questions 2 and 10
Pedagogic potential of learner autonomy	Interview Question 4 overall view of the ALC
Pedagogic potential of learner autonomy	Interview Questions 6 and 7 Tutor strategy part of the ALC
Pedagogic potential of learner autonomy	Interview Questions 8 and 9 Student part of the ALC
Other	- Effects of using the ALC

Data on each of the themes is integrated from the survey through tutor task, to interviews. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the point where no new data is found for the theme i.e., there was continuous repetition of information already received, data saturation was reached (Saumure and Given, 2008) repetition of what had been already established would not add to any value to the findings. Furthermore, at this point the study was replicable (Guest et al., 2006). Following the data saturation point, interview findings under 'Other' only were considered.

The purpose of the interview was to capture tutor reflections on their experience of using the ALC, and their views on the extent to which it could be used as a day to day teaching tool. Interviews were semi-structured, so tutors had the freedom to explore own thoughts and ideas. Question 1 focussed on background data. Interview data analysed are from questions 2 to 10 (Table 8.1).

Background information Interview Q1

Of the six tutors, four were female and two male, three had been in HE for less than 3 years, two for 4 to 8 years and one for more than 12 years (Table 7.1). All six tutors taught on the Stuch programme. There was a reasonable range of experience with a 50-50 weighting categorised as 3 years and under, and 4 years and above. There was also a similar weighting of gender, spread across both categories of experience, i.e., two female and one male for each experience category.

8.2: Findings from Tutor 3 Interview

IDENTIFICATION- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 3 AND 5

Question 3 asked the extent to which the tutor has a role in engaging learner autonomy. Question 5 asked if the tutor normally actively considered engaging learner autonomy when planning for teaching sessions.

Tutor 3 viewed the tutor's role in engaging learner autonomy as the tutor having an expectation. For this reason, the tutor should adopt a staged approach to carrying out this expectation, being mindful of levels of student confidence and motivation

> Yes, yes. I think there has got to be a clear expectation from the tutor, … staggered. 'Scaffolded' is another word to use. … because there is a level of confidence, as well as motivation, that is required on the part of the student. (Tutor 3)

Tutor 3 provided further explanation demonstrating a view of what learner autonomy is

> I think the tutor has a role in developing that confidence through a working relationship where students can experience active learning - activities in session – as well as activities- I think certain experiences – I suppose – can be rehearsed, so students get a chance to understand what's required - what the tutor is looking for in terms of independence – but be supported by the tutor and their peers in seminars, so that they know what they can do themselves to demonstrate their autonomy. (Tutor 3)

It is necessary to apply deconstruction to Tutor 3's viewpoint here to get the most out of the data.

[Deconstruction] The use of the word 'rehearsal' implies an avoidance of failure in active learning. There is an assumption that when students engage in active learning activities, they may fail, and this is to be avoided as it could affect their confidence and motivation. Furthermore, students having to be able to understand what the tutor looking for, to demonstrate their independence, is counterproductive to the nature of independence. It also privileges the tutor's perspective on what is required to be independent. Moreover, needing support to demonstrate one's autonomy implies an absence of autonomy.

Tutor 3 stated her view of learner autonomy as an expectation, that expectations may be imposed and should therefore be introduced incrementally. This limits the understanding of learner autonomy as a pedagogic tool which could be used within the session.

This data highlights what could present as two barriers to tutors engaging learner autonomy. The first barrier is a tutor's view of learner autonomy as an expectation which could be imposed, rather than a pedagogic means of engaging the student in

learning. The second takes the form of concern for students, who may not able to meet expectations of autonomy. This could result in fostering learner heteronomy rather than learner autonomy. For example, the tutor specifying what they are looking for in student's autonomous behaviours, so students play to tutor expectation rather than engage the task.

In response to Q5, actively planning for learner autonomy prior to participating in the study, Tutor 3 initially stated that she did, on further questioning, Tutor 3 planned for students 'active engagement', for what the 'students are doing'. This appears contradictory as Tutor 3 has stated during her reflection on the task that using the ALC had led her to less use of presentation slides and more use of activities. Tutor 3 agreed that hitherto, she would not have seen active engagement as relating to learner autonomy.

Relevance to HE -Interview Questions 2 and 10

Interview Q2 asked if tutors felt that recognising learner autonomy was important in HE. Tutor 3 agreed that learner autonomy was important, she gave several reasons

> it gives me the interaction that I can use to coach and respond to the work or the ideas that the students bring to sessions, it supports the content of seminars and enriches the learning experience for the group. I'm interpreting autonomy as being someone who can generate ideas and share them… someone who – not only - can generate ideas - make judgements and choices - but also articulate that …and then taking action (Tutor 3)

Thus, according to Tutor 3, learner autonomy is important to HE as it facilitates learner participation in the delivery of sessions.

Interview Q10 asked if tutors thought that the ALC would assist a tutor new to HE in engaging learner autonomy. Tutor 3 agreed that the ALC could be relevant to the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) process

> it would fit really well if that was a core construct for discussion and trial. It did make me tweak some activities, which I was very pleased with the outcome then. (Tutor 3)

Having stated the importance of learner autonomy to student participation, Tutor 3 felt that the ALC could be a means by which tutors examine their teaching activities.

Tutor 3 provided an example of how using the ALC, drew her attention to guiding her students to think first before carrying out an activity. This was a reference to her task 1

> For example, one of the activities was to generate a consent letter to show they'd read the BERA guidelines … Previously, I had intended just to give them an example without… getting them to think first …. Small tweaks made a big difference… And empowered them – the result was… more satisfying for the students. (Tutor 3)

PEDAGOGIC POTENTIAL OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

Overall view of the ALC Interview Q4

Tutor 3 found it challenging at the start, as she did not know the students; this raised a question for her of the length of time you need to know a student, before you can make judgements about their level of autonomy. She did not feel confident doing the first impressions evaluation, evident in the data (Table 7.8 column 2).

She found the ALC a useful structure to think of the students in a deeper way than what tutors normally look at

> I found it very positive a very useful structure to think of students more deeply beyond the other sorts of things that we make judgements about students on like attendance, like willingness to participate, punctuality,…, whether they talk over other people… (Tutor 3)

Thinking beyond the usual things for this tutor, was to think of actual attributes in terms of learning.

Tutor strategy part of the ALC Q6 and Q7

The tutor strategy part of the ALC influenced Tutor 3's teaching content. She recalled planning for the ALC tutor subcomponents- Thinking, Contribution to the learning of others, and Independent action. Considering the subcomponents was useful as it drew her attention to what she normally did i.e., plan collaborative activities, and what she did not do much of i.e., plan activities that required independent action. Tutor 3 did not state whether using the ALC focussed her attention on learner autonomy. What she did state was that it drew her attention to how she plans for teaching which had not included much independent action on the part of the learners.

[Deconstruction]- a term Tutor 3 used twice in proximity was 'conscious'.

> It highlighted to me that I do use collaboration a lot, and possibly don't plan for enough or a balance of- independent action. I think, as a style or as a habit, perhaps, rather than a conscious style… (Tutor 3)

and

> … It to me highlighted how much I… Perhaps my expectation around independent action could be a little low I want to look at that and do some more conscious planning around scaffolding that so that although it might be appropriate for some…. There will be times when the action needs to be joint, but even within joint action they'll be individual actions that a student can make. (Tutor 3)

Narrative data from a female respondent of similar background experience and programme on survey Q8 also stated not consciously planning for learner autonomy. It could be the same person, but this is not definite.

There appears to be a sense in usual practice, of knowing about learner autonomy but not doing something explicit to engage it, so the engagement of a student's autonomy could be more by default than by design.

Learner part of the ALC Q8 and Q9

Tutor 3 said that she was familiar with term autonomy; she had done reading to complete the PG certificate in teaching and learning but she had not come across the degrees of learner autonomy presented in this study i.e., Autonomous, Autonomous dependent, Heteronomous, Heteronomous Independent. The teaching sessions for the certificate had touched on autonomy but not heteronomy. Tutor 3 agreed that the degrees of autonomy did describe the different ways students present autonomy except for heteronomy (it describes itself).

Further findings

Tutor 3 expressed that considering students' autonomy was necessary as it helped the tutor respond to what students bring to the sessions. At the time of the study, Tutor 3 was teaching twilight sessions to students who had been at work in schools during the day. This, in her reflection, created a dynamic in the relationship between the students, their work experience, the tutor and the session content. Students demonstrate their autonomy by contributing their knowledge from practice. By allowing students' contributions, the tutor facilitates their autonomy and therefore participation and engagement.

> To stick to your plan but be responsive so that students know that you're going to use what they bring if that's relevant to the topic. They'll continue to contribute and participate and engage. (Tutor 3)

Tutor 3 also reflected on using the ALC during the study

> It made me want to read more about it. It certainly helped me when I was visualising the students and having to make decisions about them. …So as a tool, I think it's very detailed and very comprehensive. As a construct, I think it's a good… Maybe this construct will help me learn new habits, to improve my teaching. (Tutor 3)

Findings summary- Although Tutor 3's responses indicate a mild conflict in her understanding of learner autonomy i.e., on the one hand, autonomous tasks could need rehearsal so that students are sure of what the tutor wants, which appears to indicate heteronomy. On the other, Tutor 3 recognised that learner autonomy, could legitimate tutor acceptance of knowledge and experience that students bring to the sessions. Learner autonomy supports planned content i.e., has a pedagogic value.

Tutor 3 provided her view of observational criteria for an autonomous learner- students who can generate and share ideas, judgements, or choices, as well as express and act on them. This is important to observational criteria needed for learner autonomy as Scott et al. (2015) identified and was found during the sampling process for the tutor task.

Tutor 3 agreed that the ALC was a means by which tutors could consciously engage student's autonomy. Her reference to the ALC posing a possibility for discussion and trial during seminars leading to the PGCAP contributes to a view of its pedagogic potential. Her example is in line with the intentions behind the design of the ALC, which is to be a means by which tutors engage learner autonomy.

Precision - these findings address RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. For RQ1, Learner autonomy is seen by the tutor as a means of supporting planned teaching content and making tutors consider their choices in the design of tasks for students. For RQ2, there is recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, and for RQ3, both the tutor and student aspects of the ALC are affirmed as effective and original as she had not come across the ALC before.

8.3: Findings from Tutor 1 Interview

IDENTIFICATION- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 3 AND 5

In response to the extent to which the tutor has a role in engaging learner autonomy (Q3), and if the tutor normally actively considered engaging learner autonomy when planning for teaching sessions (Q5), Tutor 1 recognised that the tutor has a role in recognising strengths and needs, she identified barriers in HE where tutors are not able to get to know students well enough to be able to identify their preferences due to time and large class sizes. She found focusing on the sample students beneficial to getting to know them

> Even focusing on those individual students that you had identified, I wouldn't have done that unless you told me about that – because I was more focused on those students. Whereas, if I wasn't participating in the research I probably would have missed out. (Tutor 1)

Tutor 1's response here indicated the necessity of having a clear unequivocal means of identifying what learning autonomy is and how it is different from tutor knowledge of students. Her response to question 5 further confirms a need for a tutor to be able to identify learner autonomy.

In response to planning prior to the study, Tutor 1 referred to 'getting better at it' by responding to module evaluations, and actively meeting everyone's needs. She realised during the interview that she may not understand what learner autonomy was

> Okay, okay, okay. I do think it's going to come up that my perception of learner autonomy might be different to someone else's (Tutor 1)

This realisation was confirmed by Tutor 1's reflection on her tutor tasks where she had conflated learner autonomy with motivation and success and assumed good and bad values for the degrees of learner autonomy.

RELEVANCE TO HE -INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 2 AND 10

Question 2 asked if tutors felt that recognising learner autonomy was important to HE. Tutor 1 agreed that recognising learner autonomy was important, but it happens 'naturally' and 'without too much thinking' . Tutor 1 was not asked question 10 as the interview had to end due to time constraints.

PEDAGOGIC POTENTIAL OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

Overall view of the ALC Question 4

Tutor 1 thought it was good to be able to focus on a few students and evaluate their degree of autonomy. She realised on further reflection that she would have changed some of her evaluations, having got to know them better. Like Tutor 3, Tutor 1 presented a view about challenges with observing learner autonomy, referring to a student:

> She hadn't spoken much during the rest of the sessions. She gave me the impression that she was well able to carry out independent studies -…Then when she asked me that one question around the assignment, that's when I realised… It's only because she presented as being… She had her laptop there, she did not ask questions, but she engaged well with the group, she looked like she was listening, she did provide some of her experience. Yet …she specifically stated that she really had no clue as to what she was going to be doing. (Tutor 1)

This student had not talked much during the sessions, she did discuss with her peers and shared her own experiences, she had attended sessions with the necessary equipment and an attitude of engagement. However, did not know by the last session, what she would choose to do for her assignment. This student's situation may not imply a lack of autonomy. Tutor 1's description here is of an autonomous dependent learner who knew when to ask for guidance. Analysis of her answer shows that some tutors may take longer than others to understand what learner autonomy is. Tutor 1 had conflated autonomy with independence and assumed that since the student had asked for guidance, such a one could not be autonomous.

Tutor strategy part of the ALC Q6 and Q7

Tutor 1 recalled planning for critical reflection She concurred that the tutor subcomponents helped plan the sessions, rather than for learner autonomy. It may be that Tutor 1 found the ALC useful as a session preparation tool, rather than one that enabled tutor engagement of learner's autonomy in teaching and learning. If using the ALC enables engagement of the learners' autonomy, the pedagogic potential would enhance the learner's experience inadvertently and irrespective of the tutor's deliberate actions.

Learner evaluative part of the ALC Q8 and Q9

In response to Q8 on how familiar Tutor 1 was with the descriptors of learner autonomy designed in the ALC, she demonstrated that she was familiar with them

> Yes, they would have been things – not specifically written out as that, … I would have looked at how parents learn new strategies. …Yes, so I would have been familiar, not hugely though because – again – I've only been in this job for a year. (Tutor 1)

The descriptors of learner autonomy on the ALC were familiar to Tutor 1 in the sense of looking for ways to teach new strategies. She had come across the ethos but not the statements as set out in the ALC.

In response to Q9, Tutor 1 agreed that the descriptors were of learner autonomy, though could be more succinct with key words or presented visually

> When you are trying to place them in that category, you almost need shorter sentences. … If there was any way of it being visually clearer for the tutor … Because then you start looking at, "Oh, was it directing self to learn?" That sort of thing. I did think the description was correct… (Tutor 1)

Tutor 1 drew attention to the practicalities of observing and evaluating learner autonomy

Further finding

A tutor may not know what learner autonomy is.

Findings summary: Similar to findings on her tutor task, Tutor 1's interview further supports the importance of there being a clear definition of learner autonomy. Tutor 1 found the ALC useful to plan sessions and observe student responses to tasks.

Precision: As with the tutor task, and Tutor 3 interview, findings highlight the importance of a clear definition of learner autonomy (RQ1), tutors need to understand what learner autonomy is to engage its pedagogic potential (RQ2). RQ3, the aspects of the ALC are confirmed.

8.4: Findings from Tutor 5 Interview

IDENTIFICATION- INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 3 AND 5

Tutor 5 was reflective about the question of the part a tutor had to play in engaging learner autonomy. He drew on his own personal experience as student

> When I was a student … there was a sense in which my autonomy came from my own internal drive. … the tutors were very helpful … but, actually, at the end of the day, …, I was my own machine. I turned up, I learnt a lot and I got lots of ideas, but with all of my essays and all of my work, that was me. ….. (Tutor 5)

In his view, autonomy is the responsibility of the student

> One of the things that I've been thinking about as I've been doing this whole process is, "To what extent does autonomy come from the person rather than from the tutor?" (Tutor 5)

[Deconstruction] The question was about whether a tutor had a part to play in fostering a learner's autonomy. Tutor 5 talked about the location of autonomy, as coming 'from a person' i.e., the student, rather than a tutor. This echoes the locus of control within the

tutor /student relationship as discussed in Chapter Three. Where the control is with the learner, there is greater autonomy. Tutor 5 gave a detailed example of how autonomy comes from the student

> …I think there's a sense in which we've got to understand what everyone's individual purpose for HE is. I got to the point where my purpose for HE was to get the highest marks. I wanted to get to do the Cambridge thing. (Tutor 5)

In this view, a learner's reasons for undertaking a programme and their purpose in engaging with HE, could have a bearing on how autonomous they are. Tutor 5 gave descriptions of behaviours that autonomous learners could display

> They're usually the ones that talk most. … They're the ones that offer. They're the ones that come up with questions. They're the ones that challenge what you're saying.. … You can see that they're genuinely engaged. (Tutor 5)

From this, observable behaviours of autonomous learners include using talk and questioning during sessions, challenging ideas of others, production of quantity and quality of work, independent of tutor direction during the session- genuine engagement. Tutor 5's view is that the tutor has little or no part to play in engaging learner autonomy, though this is not stated directly. His querying how one person could teach another to do something for themselves, evidences his view that learner's autonomous behaviours are solely theirs and not something tutors can contribute to or impart

> How do you teach someone to do something for themselves?... A classic example … is when students turn around and go, "How many references should I put in?"…, if I turn around and said '20', for example, and they now put in 20, well, they haven't been autonomous.. (Tutor 5)

Tutor 5's understanding of learner autonomy appeared to develop as he explained his experience. He started with- autonomy is about doing things for yourself; there was movement from 'if you have guidance then you haven't been autonomous', to 'haven't been entirely autonomous'. This exemplifies the degrees of autonomy, he moved from

an assessment of there being no A (Autonomy) for receiving guidance, to there being some A but not completely i.e., AD (Autonomous Dependence) 'in a sense they haven't been entirely autonomous' due to the guidance. Tutor 5 gave further examples of degrees of autonomy from his experience

> …one of the things that I've realised about myself and I've realised about certain other [students] is those that want to be told exactly what to do and those that stretch things and do things a little bit differently. Again, usually, it takes autonomy to go down the right path… (Tutor 5)

In other words, 'those that want to be told exactly what to do' are H (Heteronomous), and 'those that stretch things and do things a bit differently' are A (Autonomous). Stretching things and doing things differently implies proactivity and initiative. Tutor 5, like Tutor 1 placed a value judgement on heteronomy and autonomy. Autonomy takes a person down the 'right path', conversely, wanting to be told what to do- heteronomy is not the right path. This shows a need for some tutors to know what learner autonomy is and how it is characterised by degrees. Tutor 5 bears this out in further discussion on the nature of learner autonomy

> It's very difficult to gauge autonomy. I suppose if you could look at autonomy in terms of motivation to succeed and motivation to exceed, then, yes, I would say that's the fruit of autonomy. So, I would say that it's someone that really does things on their own and just pushes themselves. (Tutor 5)

Motivation as an outcome of autonomy is in line with the literature as discussed in Chapter Three. However, Tutor 5 personifies learner autonomy by referring to it as someone. Thus, autonomy is about who a person is, a type of person who acts independently and is self-motivated. This further exemplifies his view, that a tutor may not have a part to play in fostering autonomy as one cannot make another 'be' a certain way.

In response to question five, on tutor consideration of planning for learner autonomy prior to participating in this study, Tutor 5 would not have considered this but would have thought of ways of engaging students

> I don't think I would have. I think the only way that I would have thought about engaging learner autonomy was through the issue of making sure people weren't bored…. "Let's read this article and write a list about this." Whether I was doing it for the purpose of learner autonomy: I don't think I was. I was doing it because I didn't want people to get bored. (Tutor 5)

by doing so he would have inadvertently fostered their autonomy

> Yes, as a matter of teaching practice, but the by-product of that was that I was actually, without thinking about it,… (Tutor 5)

This a second example during interviews, where a tutor reports inadvertently 'without thinking about it' creating an environment for engaging learner autonomy, by providing activities that students can engage with. Using the ALC, highlighted to Tutor 5 that the responses given by his students to his planned activities were indicative of learner autonomy.

Relevance to HE -Interview Questions 2 and 10

In response to Q2 in Tutor 5's view, learner autonomy is a logical assumption of participation in HE largely from the point of view of the fees students pay, and students' need to be autonomous to complete their assignments.

In relation Q10, Tutor 5 agreed that the ALC would be helpful to new tutors

> Yes, with a detailed session about what that is. As I said, the danger is that they'll do exactly what I've done up until this interview, which is link autonomy with independently doing amazing essays or amazing work. (Tutor 5)

Furthermore, Tutor 5 like Tutor 3, related learner autonomy to tutor expectation

> It's almost different levels of what I can expect someone to do and what I wouldn't. I would fully expect someone slightly older with a family to not do as much…Whereas, there's a sense that, at 18 – no offence – you aren't really doing

> that much. So, you would hope that autonomy would result in them independently choosing to do a lot of work and a lot of research because they've got more space and more time... (Tutor 5)

[Deconstruction] Here learner autonomy is seen in the use of time to produce independent work, with assumptions about social demands on learner time. There are lower expectations of older students with families, than younger single students; respectively, non-traditional students and traditional students. The younger traditional students are expected to be more academically autonomous.

Use of the ALC could expose assumptions and expectations about learner autonomy which have nothing to do with the locus of control in the tutor learner relationship and therefore do not describe learner autonomy.

PEDAGOGIC POTENTIAL OF LEARNER AUTONOMY

Overall view of the ALC Question 4

Using the ALC helped Tutor 5 think about his teaching and include active learning strategies, thinking about his teaching developed into thinking about his role as an HE tutor. His reflections demarcated students in terms of their willingness to engage in HE and the extent to which it was his role to make them 'learners'.

> there was no way that I was going to tell off a woman in her mid-40s for not doing the task that I'd asked… In HE, it's not that kind of approach…I think autonomy is really hard to enforce, if that makes sense. (Tutor 5)

[Deconstruction] there are issues of tutor/student power relations in Tutor 5's response. The difference in the roles of tutors/teachers to 'enforce' a learner's response across the phases in education. Tutor 5 gives further explanation through the place of authority in tutor students relationships at HE

> It (using the ALC) also raised the issue of authority in HE. To what extent does an HE tutor, bearing in mind that it's now an open market, have the right to enforce things? (Tutor 5)

These reflections further exemplify a need for clarity on learner autonomy. Who is a learner? Is it possible to enforce autonomy?

> I think, with this issue of autonomy, if you're trying to make someone do something or trying to encourage or foster autonomy, it really is up to them. (Tutor 5)

Using the ALC has made a need to explore the difference between a learner and a person explicit. Who is a learner? A person who attends a learning environment or a person who engages with learning activities? In addition, using the ALC by this tutor highlighted questions of what fostering a learner's autonomy means. Should this include enforcement?

Tutor strategy part of the ALC Q6 and Q7

Tutor 5 recalled using four of the six ALC tutor subcomponents in planning for his sessions

> One of the tasks was the 'Considering the Learning of Others' and 'Contributing…' That was the presentation-related one. The other task, I believe, was 'Thinking' and 'Critical Reflection' … (Tutor 5)

He also considered evidence of student engagement from participation in tasks to explain how he had evaluated their degrees of learner autonomy. Using the ALC made Tutor 5 focus on learner autonomy more than he normally would have.

> Definitely, yes. It made me think about learner autonomy in a way that I probably hadn't because it made me think about autonomy within the lesson as opposed to autonomy within the assignment… (Tutor 5)

Tutor 5's normal focus for learner autonomy was to do with students' response to assignments rather than their response during sessions

> When I came to this (the study), it made me think about the lesson and, "To what extent are people really being independent?" Are they actually taking part in the tasks? "Am I actually making space…?" The hardest thing I found becoming a lecturer was not feeling guilty was when I was not saying something. (Tutor 5)

[Deconstruction] It is useful to note Tutor 5's developing understanding of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy as the interview progressed. Using the ALC made Tutor 5 explore how his approach could create barriers to learner autonomy '…am I making space', and why a change to his approach could be a benefit to his sessions by recognising the pedagogic potential in learner contributions

> There was a sense in which, "Actually, if they're talking for 20 minutes on a question I've asked…" I remembered being interrupted, having spoken for 10 minutes about something, and it made me realise that, sometimes, sitting down and listening to everyone talk is just as important as me going through my next incredible slide. (Tutor 5)

This contributes to Tutor 5's response to Q4 on the role of the tutor in engaging learner autonomy. Using the ALC enabled Tutor 5 to adjust his teaching strategies to create a greater possibility of realising the outcomes of learner autonomy. Prior to the study, he had expected evidence of autonomous outcomes from student assignments which come after the teaching and learning sessions but had not made space for engaging learner autonomy within sessions.

Learner part of the ALC Q8 and Q9

Tutor 5 confirmed in his view the originality of the degrees of learner autonomy proposed in this study

> No, this was the first time I'd really seen it and had it explained to me. (Tutor 5)

He also agreed that the degrees describe differing levels of learner autonomy

> I think they (the degrees of learner autonomy) do. I think either we need to create a zero or we need people like myself to reinterpret what they're seeing. Actually, the fact that she's not doing anything doesn't mean that she's not being autonomous. Actually, it might be evidence that she is being the ultimate level of autonomous because she is not listening to anything you're saying. She has her own way of doing it. (Tutor 5)

Tutor 5's suggestion of the possibility of a zero-degree description, supports the argument that learner autonomy does not apply to persons who do not engage in learning, also attendance does not mean engagement. Rather than a zero-degree descriptor there could be a clarification of who a learner is and who isn't. The issue of refusing to engage is explained further under Tutor 5's further findings.

Further findings

Tutor 5 raised an issue to do with the place of a refusal to engage within the degrees of learner autonomy. Was this learner autonomy or learner heteronomy?

> "How do I judge the autonomy of someone that has done nothing?" Does that make sense? "What do I tick because they haven't asked for help?" They're zero. It's like it didn't happen…That wasn't just not doing it generally. That was just a point-blank refusal to do it…. (Tutor 5)

This scenario presented by Tutor 5 presents a key point for consideration. During his tutor task, a student who did not participate was categorised as H, however a key aspect of heteronomy is dependence. This example is about no dependence, which logically translates to independence to choose own preference, which was -no response,. Tutor 5 realised this

> … in one sense, she's being totally autonomous. She's being so autonomous that she's not even listening to the instructions … She, in one sense, has absolutely no autonomy … in the other sense, has complete autonomy because she's totally disregarding what's being said. …Do you see how there are two different ends for autonomy there? (Tutor 5)

Tutor 5' raised the position of 'two different ends for autonomy' discussed further in findings below. Another finding from this interview is the role of considering the learning of others in learner autonomy. In response to an impromptu question, Tutor 5 gave an example of a student's response to giving presentations

At first glance, there are indications of A (autonomy) and AD (autonomous dependence). The autonomous person had not exactly followed the tutor's instructions, instead, had done things their own way. The person had engaged the opportunity to contribute to the learning of peers but had not been considerate of their (peers) learning experience. This exemplifies arguments discussed in Chapter Three, on individual autonomy being regulated, by the autonomy of others through a cohered social contract and relational autonomy (Rousseau/Cole, 1923; Nedelsky, 1989). Others who followed the tutor's instruction, may have appeared less autonomous for 'doing what the tutor said'. However, they displayed autonomy rather than autonomous dependence as there is a difference between tutor instruction and tutor guidance. Instructions are requirements to be followed, guidance is support used to follow instructions. Following instructions may not be indicative of a lack of autonomy as has been assumed so far in this study, i.e., Table 5.2 has 'complying with requirements (5g)' as a learner heteronomy statement.

Findings summary Tutor 5 seemed to struggle with a conflict between what he saw as his role as a tutor, and what he understood as the extent to which he could make a difference to an HE learner's autonomy. There was an evolution of ideas and understanding as the interview progressed. Tutor 5 identified observable behaviours of autonomous learners as talk and questioning during sessions, challenging ideas of others, production of quantity and quality of work. There was further indication that tutors need to understand what learner autonomy is. A way of being? A response within a learning environment? Is it something that tutors can enforce?

Where learner autonomy is seen as the student's way of being, there is little or no role for the tutor in fostering it. Where a tutor does not consciously plan for learner

autonomy, they may do so inadvertently, by providing active learning tasks. The question remains that a lack of recognition of learner autonomy could lead further lack of recognition of tutor action which could present a barrier to learner autonomy as discussed in Chapter Three.

Tutor 5 raised the possibility of a 'zero learner autonomy'. A person who refuses to engage in learning cannot be described as a learner, therefore the concept of learner autonomy does not apply. Their actions may appear autonomous however other than being autonomous learners, they are autonomous persons. This interview further confirmed that the ALC could be useful to tutors new to teaching in HE to enable them to understand what learner autonomy is and how to engage it during teaching sessions; to recognise that learner autonomy can be fostered and cannot be enforced. Tutors need to self-evaluate expectations of students and how these could constitute a barrier to recognising the degree of autonomy learners have irrespective of their social situations.

Precision: At this point there is data saturation with how findings address the research questions. As with the other tutors, there is the importance of a clear definition of learner autonomy (RQ1), tutors need to understand what learner autonomy is to engage its pedagogic potential (RQ2). RQ3, the aspects of the ALC are confirmed.

8.5: Findings from Tutor 6 Interview

As with Tutors 3,1 and 5 Tutor 6 agreed that recognising learner autonomy is important in HE. Like Tutor 3 and 1, she agreed that tutors have a role to play in engaging learner autonomy, and prior to the study this is not something she would have consciously done. As with Tutors 3,1 and 5, Tutor 6, had not come across the degrees of learner autonomy before participating in this study.

Further findings

There are two findings from Tutor 6 different from findings in the first 3 interviews, Firstly, the implicitness of learner autonomy in HE teaching practices, a conclusion drawn from the discussion of HE policy literature on learner autonomy in Chapter Two.

There it is concluded that the implicitness of learner autonomy in HE the UK approach has implications for tutor recognition in their day to day practices. Tutor 6 is an experienced tutor with leadership responsibility, an explicit agenda for learner autonomy in HE will be difficult to miss. Yet, Tutor 6 referred to learner autonomy as the unwritten point of HE.

> Yes, I do think recognising learner autonomy is important in HE, because in many ways I think that is the, perhaps unwritten, point of HE…For me, one of the main purposes of HE is to encourage people to be independent learners where you're not reliant on somebody else to support your learning. (Tutor 6)

Tutor 6 refers to learner autonomy as the unwritten point of HE. Learner autonomy is a written point as is clarified in the EHEA literature, however, the UK approach as identified in Chapter Two, makes it implicit, therefore easy for tutors to miss. In Tutor 6's view, what is explicit is content and knowledge

> Because I don't think it's (learner autonomy) something that we promote to students enough that, that is part of what we're doing. I think we concentrate very much on subject content and developing subject knowledge. (Tutor 6)

Using the ALC made learner autonomy and tutor practices for fostering it more explicit. One of the ways of making it more explicit, was through the provision of a 'meta language' for recognising and describing learner autonomy.

> Yes, and actually it's all part of the meta-language, as well, isn't it? If you know that things are there, unless you've got the language and the vocabulary to talk about those things, then often you don't talk about those things. Part of the experience was being given some of the language with which to think about it and talk about it. (Tutor 6)

Precision: The interview with Tutor 6 provides further evidence of the implicitness of learner autonomy in UK HE policy, this has implications for RQ1, the importance of recognising learner autonomy. Furthermore, her view of the ALC providing a

metalanguage for engaging learner autonomy supports its pedagogic potential RQ2 and affirms the parts of the ALC- RQ3.

8.6: Findings from Tutor 4 Interview

Background- Tutor 4 was one of the male participants, falling within the 8 and above years range of HE experience. As with the previous four tutors, Tutor 4 agreed that recognising learner autonomy is important in HE. In the same vein, he agreed that tutors have a role to play in engaging learner autonomy.

Further findings

Tutor 4 highlighted three new issues. First, how institutional expectations could undermine tutor practices in engaging learner autonomy. Second, how learners may be autonomous in one context and less so in another. Third, how the proposed degrees of learner autonomy could be an indicator of student progress through the levels.

Firstly, accountability is prioritised over learners being able to exercise their autonomy.

> We like to think we are encouraging them; we are supporting autonomous learning … and then half the time we're making them fill in grids. We're not saying, "Look, there's a grid, you can present it in that way if you wanted to, actually, you could go off-piste if you want and you can find another way". Because you've got this other issue about HE needing to tick a box, and needing to be accountable, and having an endless paper trail, and it done in the 'right' way. (Tutor 4)

Thus, there are institutional restrictions which could limit learner transference of skills from other contexts. Work based learners make autonomous decisions at work but need to find out how to transfer their autonomous practices to their learning as HE students

> I think also our students are a bit different to more traditional undergraduates, in that they have a professional role …. They have to have a certain amount of autonomy to decide on what the best strategies to use for children are, ….I think

> sometimes it's telling them…"Well, you have that problem solving issue there…Now you need to translate that. … you need to deal with it for yourself within the context of HE. (Tutor 4)

The need to meet institutional requirements could limit the extent to which learners can make decisions about how they learn, and how they demonstrate acquisition of the module outcomes which are subject to validation rules. Yet these rules are reviewed considering among others, previous student feedback. There develops a conundrum, as feedback from previous students informs current module requirements, which new students may find restrictive. As they progress through the levels, learners become more autonomous, thus degree of autonomy becomes an indicator student progress.

> … I think, down to their levels of autonomy. If they've come through two years of undergraduate study, and they're ready to be let off the leash, and they want to go, then it's great. If not, certainly in my experience of working on the BA, we sometimes struggle. (Tutor 4)

Tutor 4 used the degrees of autonomy to evaluate where his level 5 students were and anticipated using the descriptors to see any changes in evaluation by the end of level 6.

8.7: Findings from Tutor 2 Interview

Background- Tutor 2 was one of the female participants falling within the 1 to 4 years range, 18 months of HE experience as at the time of interview. As with the previous five tutors, Tutor 2 agreed that recognising learner autonomy is important in HE, that tutors have a role to play in engaging learner autonomy, and as with Tutors 3, 1,5 and 6, that planning for engaging learner autonomy was something done subconsciously.
Two aspects of new data from Tutor 2, included further data on the relevance of the ALC to the PG CAP and issues around meeting individual learner needs, whilst providing opportunities for students to consider the learning of others.

Having recently completed the PG CAP, Tutor2's reflection during interview, strengthened data provided by Tutors 3 and 5 as the usefulness of the ALC to new tutors. In response to Q10

> Absolutely. It needs to be incorporated into the PG cap materials, because I do think it helps you understand, look at them from a different perspective, and is helpful in planning rather than just being, "Right, I need to deliver this today." It's actually encouraging ways of thinking about them engaging in deeper learning, rather than just that surface learning of the content. (Tutor 2)

The reference to deep and surface learning here is important, Prosser and Trigwell's (1999) deep and surface learning had been reviewed in Chapter Three, prior to data collection evaluating tutor practices and how these may engage learner autonomy or otherwise. To encourage deep learning among a relatively small cohort, she focused on individuals for a period, rather than engage the group.

Further findings

Further to previous findings, the ALC could be a means of tutors providing deeper learning opportunities for students and could benefit new Tutors as part of the PGCAP. In addition, there are challenges around getting learners to consider the learning of others as a means of developing learner autonomy.

Precision: The relevance of the ALC to the PG CAP and meeting individual learner needs implies an understanding of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy for which the ALC is designed. This addresses RQs 2 and 3.

8.8 Conclusion

Tutors identified learner autonomy as

1) being able to generate ideas, make judgements and choices and articulate them
2) appear confident and know you can do something quite well.
3) sometimes needing reassurance

Tutors were previously unfamiliar with the terms used for the degrees of learner autonomy, as the configuration was new. They found that the degrees of learner autonomy described levels of autonomy of widening participation students.

There was consensus on the importance of learner autonomy to HE. Tutor responses supported a need for an overt awareness of learner autonomy, and the necessity of learner autonomy for successful degree completion, lifelong learning and employability. Their responses validate the significance of tutors recognising the role of learner autonomy in their teaching practices. Also identified, was a need for clarity as to what autonomy was.

In considering the importance of learner autonomy to HE, a distinction was made between 'traditional' students and those with a 'professional' role. Tutor 4 (Interviews, 2017) identified a conundrum with widening participation students (i.e., professional). They may engage autonomously within professional contexts but find doing so challenging within academic contexts. This tutor referred to a need for widening participation students to translate their autonomous approaches from the workplace to their academic learning environments. This one of several challenges outlined by Gibbs and Armsby (2010, p. 185) within HEIs over a quarter of a century of work-based learning with 'all its multivariate forms and taxonomies'.

Tutors agreed that it would be beneficial to share the ALC with new tutors, specifically, for attention to learner autonomy to be a part of the UKPSF guidance. Three tutors felt the ALC should be a strategy for new tutors during the process of gaining the PGCAP. Another who had recently completed the PGCAP was surprised that learner autonomy had not been mentioned.

Five of the six tutors interviewed, mentioned the subcomponents of the tutor's methods they had used during their trial of the ALC. Tutors used from 2 to 4 subcomponents across their activities. 'Contributing to the learning of others' was used 5 times. 'Critical reflection' and 'Considering the learning of others' 3 times each. 'Thinking' was the focus

twice, and ‘independent action’ once. ‘Decision making’ was not mentioned but could be inferred. This gave some insight into the practicalities of using the strategies.

Tutors reported effects, using phases like’ it made me….’ Or ‘it makes you…’ The structure provided by the ALC worked as a means by which tutors paid deeper attention to their students, identifying what they brought to the teaching and learning sessions. In addition, a tutor spoke about the ALC providing a meta language for what you know is there but have no means by which it could be expressed. The possibility of the ALC providing a meta language for degrees of learner autonomy was not considered in the design of the ALC.
Having a meta language enabled a tutor to realise the need to reflect deeply and break learner autonomy down into observable characteristics.

The next chapter (Chapter Nine) draws the findings and precision analysis from the survey, tutor tasks and interviews together, to establish warrants for the validity of claims made, in line with the FraIM. This chapter also presents a synthesis of research questions, literature, methods, and findings to conclude this study.

Chapter Nine- Discussion Synthesis and Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings, synthesises warrants for claims, and concludes the study in four sections. Section two discusses the main findings and the warrants, with backing conditions for claims. Section three identifies important contributions this study makes to learner autonomy, whilst section four identifies limitations. Section five concludes the study with a succinct summary.

This study has been about the design and exploration of the feasibility of the ALC, a means of engaging a learner's autonomy, as a part of the pedagogic process. An affirmative postmodernist, pragmatic approach was adopted to investigate teaching experiences of tutors engaging learners' autonomy in widening participation teaching and learning sessions. The assumption was that where tutors recognised the pedagogic potential presented by learner's autonomy, an equitable way of providing an HE experience for students could be provided.

It was necessary to adopt an affirmative postmodernist, pragmatic approach to this study, for two reasons. Firstly, widening participation students tend to come from the margins of the academic world, they may have been out of the teaching and learning experience for an extended period, and might not have left compulsory and post compulsory education, with qualifications normally associated with study at HE levels. This places such learners at a disadvantage from the onset for example, Burns and Sinfield, (2004) identify tutors' use of academic language as experienced by learners as a hierarchal form of communication, with the potential to exclude those outside the hierarchy from successful engagement with academic learning.

An affirmative postmodernist approach delves into possibilities of inequality and power relations between students and tutors, to expose what is unequitable or hidden.

There are multiple reasons for being on the margins of academic endeavour, potentially, issues of social injustice or disadvantage (Callendar, 2009a). The main characteristic of an affirmative postmodernist approach is its direct agenda to expose inequity, injustice, or privileging which is usually hegemonic and therefore unseen (O'Leary, 2018; Rosenau, 1992). This approach would expose hegemonic assumptions about the learning of widening participation students which could be overlooked by other approaches. Privileging was addressed in the study, as there was the likelihood of learners being disadvantaged by tutor assumptions and tutors being disadvantaged by learner demands.

A second reason for adopting this approach is the hiddenness of learner autonomy in UK HE policy and practice.

> Some learners commencing HE with flexible and comparatively fewer entry qualifications, have the autonomy to engage in the teaching and learning experience. This contribution should be recognised and made explicit.

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, learner autonomy is assumed rather than stated in UK HE policy, despite being in line with the EHEA framework which is explicit about the role of learner autonomy in HE. Thus, an affirmative postmodernist approach was necessary to meet the fundamental reasons for this study. In addition, a pragmatic approach was necessary as it was the experience and practice of tutors that would provide data from which findings and claims are made.

The main research question asked

> How feasible is the newly designed autonomy in learning construct (ALC) in supporting HE tutor practices to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

This question was supported by three sub-questions:

RQ 1: How do tutors see learner autonomy?

RQ 2: To what extent do tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in teaching and learning?

RQ 3: What aspects of the ALC are likely to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy?

The research questions were answered by evidence from policy, literature and the empirical investigation conducted. Three a priori themes provided a means for integrating data:

- Identification of what learner autonomy is
- learner autonomy and HE
- the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy

These themes also provided a means of integrating findings from policy and the review of literature in chapters two and three with the main data collection sources. They provide answers to the research questions explained further in the next section.

9.2 Findings, Claims and Warrantability

Warrantability is a pragmatic way of establishing validity of claims in mixed methods research, particularly where use of data is largely narrative or non-parametric and cannot 'tested' for reliability (Plowright, 2011). The FraIM proposes a means of qualifying claims and backing these with warrants from data and literature, as explained in Figure 4.5 (page 88).

The main research question asked how feasible the newly developed autonomy in learning construct (ALC) was in supporting HE tutor practices to engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Each theme provided evidence towards confirmation that the ALC could support tutor practices in engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Themes enable researchers answer the questions (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

The a priori themes provided a space within which each of the sub questions RQs 1 to 3 were addressed.

THEME 1- IDENTIFICATION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY:

RQ1 on how tutors see learner autonomy was explored through this theme. The identification of learner autonomy theme produced findings, which indicated a mixed view of how tutors see learner autonomy.

Tutors see learner autonomy as an important part of day to day teaching

This view is in line with Little's (1991) description of general and psychological arguments for learner autonomy; respectively, the development of self-determinate citizens, and efficient learners able to assimilate and transfer their learning. Rich and deep data from the tutor reflection on the use of the ALC task and interviews, identified a contrasting view

Less experienced tutors may not be sure of what learner autonomy is

Assumptions here included learner autonomy being relevant to assignments, rather than the teaching and learning process, also, a conflation of learner autonomy with how students learn. The importance of less experienced tutors understanding learner autonomy and its potential, is addressed further in the recommendations below. The use of deconstruction with deep and rich data, exposed arguments that may have been overlooked, for example the understanding that learner autonomy applies to a person who wants to learn, indicated by their engagement, and is not applicable to a learner who may attend but does not engage.

Tutors see learner autonomy as involving autonomous behaviours of proactivity, motivation, independence, decision making, own responsibility for learning and contribution to the learning others

The autonomous behaviours listed above as seen by tutors, constitute the tutor method subcomponents of the ALC. Tutors agree that these autonomous behaviours can be evaluated by degrees of autonomy which are Autonomous, Autonomous dependent, Heteronomous and Heteronomous independent.

Thus, RQ3 which explores confirmation of aspects of the ALC for learner autonomy, was also addressed within this theme. This is discussed further under the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy theme below.

Findings indicate that where students take active opportunities provided to engage in their learning, their autonomy as learners is likely to be engaged. This based on the following qualifiers within this study:

1. From the survey, a median percentage agreement score of 84% on question 5 which asked tutors to identify statements which relate to learner autonomy.
2. During the survey, tutors selected elements of the ALC as strategies to foster and evaluate learner autonomy. 5 out of 6 tutor subcomponents and the tutor evaluative 'performance' aspects were selected as means for fostering and evaluating learner autonomy respectively.
3. During the tutor task, tutors provided learning activities based on at least one tutor subcomponent and used the degrees of learner autonomy to evaluate student responses to the tasks.
4. During the interviews, it was found that learner autonomy applies to learners who engage rather than those who attend. If a person does not want to learn, it becomes illogical to expect autonomous learner behaviours from them.

Therefore, this study claims that:

Tutors see learner autonomy as an important part of day to day teaching, shown by learners who engage in learning, involving active learning strategies such as proactivity, motivation, independence, decision making, own responsibility for learning and contribution to the learning others.

Unless, this claim is rebutted by evidence that these active learning strategies do not require action on the part of the learner, and evidence that attendance at learning sessions without engagement makes a person a learner.

This claim is backed by literature which identifies that student-centred, interactive, and transformational teaching styles engage learner autonomy (Ecclestone, 2002; Ryan and Deci, 1985; Little, 1991; Benson, 2013). Student centred teaching styles move the supervision of learning from the tutor to the students (Brandes and Ginnis, 1986). As students complete each cycle of HE, less input is expected from the tutor and more input from the student (Dublin descriptors, 2005; EQF LLL, 2004, Credit level descriptors for HE 2016). Learner autonomy requires engagement with others, as individual autonomy is intrinsic, natural, and relational, and develops from social collaboration (Nedelsky, 1979; Ryan and Deci, 1985; Little, 1991; Benson, 2013). Furthermore, it is impossible to learn, grow or achieve anything without engagement with others in one way or another (Nedelsky, 1989).

THEME 2- RELEVANCE - LEARNER AUTONOMY AND HE OUTCOMES

RQ1 on how tutors see learner autonomy was also explored through this theme. Findings from data show that tutors see learner autonomy as relevant to the purposes of HE. They also agree that learner autonomy has a role for student motivation and challenge and to a lesser extent, for teaching, though learner autonomy facilitates learner participation in the delivery of sessions.

Tutors saw learner autonomy as outcome of HE, necessary to its purposes and important to the quality of teaching and learning

Learner autonomy in this view is a critical autonomy as posited by Ecclestone (2002) where there is a shared transformation in the relationship between tutor and learner. Tutors engage learners using various levels of support and guidance through 'persistent patience' (Freire and Shor 1987, p.157) until learners transform into proactive, self-

directed learners able to use their initiative and decision making (Little, 1991, Benson, 2013) in lifelong learning (EQF LLL). Furthermore, RQ 3 is addressed as rich, and deep data from tutor reflection on the use of the ALC task and interviews, identified that the ALC could help new tutors being inducted into teaching and learning in HE, as a means by which they examine their teaching activities.

These findings are based on the following qualifiers within this study:
1) From the survey, a median percentage score of 88% agreement indicated that in the view of tutors, learner autonomy is necessary to most of the purposes of HE, though for some tutors, this may not include teaching,
2) From the survey, 96% agreement that learner autonomy was important for student engagement, which involves motivation and challenge. There is a reciprocal relationship between opportunities for student engagement and the development of learner autonomy.
3) From the interviews, three of the six participating tutors expressed a view that the ALC could be a useful strategy for new tutors as a part of the teaching sessions for the PGCAP

Therefore, this study claims that:
Learner autonomy is considered important to the purposes of HE though to a lesser extent for teaching, and the ALC designed and inducted within this study could provide a means by which tutors new to teaching in HE, may engage a learner's autonomy. Unless, this claim is rebutted by evidence that learner autonomy is not important to the purposes of HE or where learner autonomy is considered important, evidence that new HE tutors will not need a strategy to foster and engage the autonomy of HE learners.

This claim is backed by literature which identifies Learner autonomy as an expected outcome of HE according to the Bologna Declaration (1999), the Dublin Descriptors (2005) and the Framework for Higher Education (2014). Sections A1 and A4 of the UKPSF require tutors to design and plan learning activities and develop effective learning environments, among others. (UKPSF, 2011). These environments should consist of student-centred approaches which provide opportunities for student responsibility,

participation and engagement required in HE (Brandis and Ginnis, 1986). The ALC is designed to develop opportunities for student participation and engagement through tutor engagement of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy; credit accumulation and transfer identifies HE levels of study by the context and the degree of autonomy expected of the learner (Credit Level Descriptors for HE, 2016). Furthermore, the ALC provides a support structure for the operation of flexible pedagogies, specifically learner empowerment through co-creation, and transformative capabilities through an emphasis on agency and competence (Ryan and Tilbury 2013).

Theme 3- Pedagogic Potential of learner Autonomy

This theme mainly addresses RQs 2 and 3. Findings from survey, tutor task and interviews are categorised into 3 areas

1) Using the ALC
2) Tutor Subcomponents
3) Degrees of learner autonomy

Using the ALC

RQ2 explored whether tutors recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy in teaching and learning. To recognise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, is to engage the learner's autonomy as a part of the teaching and learning process. Reflection on the ideas of Watkins and Mortimore, (1999) and Benson, (2013), led to a conclusion that learners have a natural tendency to engage learning activities, and to enhance their learning through autonomous actions. This constitutes a pedagogic potential which tutors may plan for and evaluate.

Findings from data show that use of the ALC exposed assumptions and expectations about learner autonomy, provided deeper learning opportunities for students, as well as a 'meta language' for describing degrees of learner autonomy.

> The ALC also enabled tutors adjust teaching strategies for a possibility of planning for, or inadvertently, realising outcomes of learner autonomy.

Thus, some tutors directly recognised the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy by the end of the tutor task and interviews, and others engaged the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy without realising it, by following through on planning, using the tutor subcomponents and by evaluating degrees of learner autonomy.

These findings are based on the following qualifiers within this study:
1) Data from tutors who used the ALC, to plan their teaching sessions over a five-week period, indicated that tutors had differing expectations of learner autonomy.
2) Written and verbal reflections from tutors who participated in interviews having used the ALC in their teaching practice, indicated that where tutors did not have a clear understanding of what learner autonomy was, they still 'unconsciously' provided an environment for students to use their autonomy as a part of the teaching and learning in sessions. It was also found that the ALC provided a language for discussing degrees of learner autonomy.
3) Narrative data from the survey indicated that tutors may engage learner autonomy 'unconsciously' without planning to do so.

Therefore, this study claims that tutors' recognition of the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy was variable.

> Tutors who used the ALC found it was an effective tool as it encourages possibilities for engaging a learner's autonomy through its teaching subcomponents, evaluations of degrees of learner autonomy, and its provision of a language of description for learner autonomy.

Tutors who used the ALC without understanding what learner autonomy is, engaged learner autonomy similarly during their teaching sessions.

Unless, this claim is rebutted by evidence that the tutor subcomponents are not tutor practices which can develop learner autonomy, and evidence that the degrees of learner autonomy do not provide descriptions of different levels of learner autonomy.

This claim is backed by literature which asserts that student-centred, interactive, and transformational teaching styles engage learner autonomy (Ecclestone, 2002; Brandis and Ginnis, 2012; Ryan and Deci, 1985; Little, 1991; Benson, 2013). Furthermore, suitable conditions for engaging learner autonomy involve what the tutor does and how the student responds (Ryan and Deci, 1985; Fazey and Fazey, 2001; Weinstein et.al 2013), thus choices tutors make have implications for learner's autonomous responses. Little (1991) and Candy (1991) identify a psychological relation between a learner's capacity for autonomy and the process and content of learning. This demonstrates a connection between tutor strategy and a learner's autonomous responses.

Tutor Subcomponents

RQ3 looked for a confirmation that the parts of the ALC are feasible for engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Findings from data identify five of the six proposed tutor subcomponents of the ALC, as agreed by tutors as providing opportunities for engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, they also provide a means of improving tutor teaching practices. Little (1995) emphasises the dialogic role of tutors as 'learners do not automatically accept responsibility for their learning--teachers must help them to do so…' (p.176) by providing appropriate opportunities.

Tutor subcomponents guide tutors on providing opportunities for engaging learner autonomy in their teaching sessions

This based on the following qualifiers within this study:

1) From the survey, a median percentage score of 82% indicated agreement that five of the six proposed tutor subcomponents, could provide opportunities for engaging with learner autonomy.

2) From the survey, 73% of tutor strategies not considered in the design of the ALC, could be mapped to five of the six ALC Tutor subcomponents

3) From the survey there was a minimum of 92% agreement on the importance of learner autonomy for the five TEF indicators of teaching quality

4) From the survey, 'considering the learning of others' was selected to a lesser extent than the five other tutor subcomponents. However, from the tutor task it was selected three times where 'decision making' selected in the survey, was not directly selected in the tutor task but inferred.

Therefore, this study claims that at least five tutor subcomponents of the ALC - engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. They are also a means for improving tutor teaching practices.

Tutor subcomponents that engage the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy:

Thinking, Critical Reflection, Decision Making,

Independent action. Contributing to the learning of others.

Unless, this claim is rebutted by evidence that the tutor subcomponents do not provide opportunities for engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, and evidence that planning for active learning does not enhance tutor teaching skills.

This claim is backed by literature which identifies thinking in the sense of intellectual initiative, for example Dewey, (1916/1941) making opportunities for independence in observation, and decision making. As well as Fink's (2013) active learning strategies which involve tutors designing activities which include students thinking, interacting with others, observing, and doing. Little (1991:4) suggests that a learner's capacity for autonomy is evidenced through a combination of their 'detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action'. Additionally, Ecclestone's (2002) critical autonomy necessitates the development of skills of critical thinking, reflection, and engagement, as well as contributing to the learning of others. Ecclestone's argument is influenced by Freire (1986) who views students as challenging and learning from other students and identifies a characteristic of being rational as having the ability to make critical choices which affect self and others. Furthermore, Dewey, (1916/1941) argues that freedom in learning enables a learner to contribute to the learning of others.

Degrees of learner autonomy

RQ3 confirmation on the parts of the ALC feasible for engaging the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy, also includes the tutor evaluative part. Findings from data indicate that the four degrees of learner autonomy inducted in this study, show extent of a learner's autonomy as a means for tutors to evaluate learner responses to tasks.

This based on the following qualifiers within this study:
1) Strong selection of learner autonomy and learner heteronomy statements in Q5 of the survey, which are descriptors for the 4 degrees of learner autonomy.
2) Data from tutors who used the degrees of learner autonomy to evaluate their learner responses during a five-week period of using the ALC
3) Reflections from tutors who participated in interviews having used the ALC in their teaching practice.

Therefore, this study claims that the degrees of learner autonomy are descriptors of differing levels of learner autonomy in general teaching and learning.

Autonomy, Autonomous Dependence,

Heteronomous Independence, and Heteronomy

Unless, this claim is rebutted by evidence that these four descriptors are not descriptive of differing degrees of learner autonomy.

The four degrees of learner autonomy are a contribution to literature proposed as states of resilience for critical learners (Ladenika, 2017). The concept of 4 degrees of learner autonomy which related to one another was influenced by the early ideas of Maton (2004) on autonomy codes. Maton's ideas on autonomy codes remained undeveloped until 2018 after the proposal for states of resilience had been published in 2017. Maton and Howard's (2018) autonomy codes begin from the premise that any set of practices have constituents that relate in specific ways. Following Bernstein's (2004) concept of external and internal relations, Maton and Howard, (2018) posit interrelated continua of positional and relational autonomy, which interlink to produce 4 autonomy typologies of

varying strength and insulation. The typologies are based on relations between a specific context and other contexts.

9.3 Contribution made by this study

These terms currently not existing in the literature emerged from or were inducted within this study:

1) Autonomy in learning construct
2) The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy
3) The four learner autonomy codes (Degrees of learner autonomy)
4) Heteronomous Independence
5) Learner heteronomy
6) Theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy

These terms are indicative of the contribution this study makes to knowledge about learner autonomy. The autonomy in learning construct is the main contribution. Although inducted within an HE environment, the ALC may be used within other phases of education. The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy has been discussed extensively and is a focus for future research. Pedagogy for learner autonomy (Smith, 2003) is in current literature though markedly different from the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy. Smith's (2003) weak and strong pedagogies describe teaching methods in English second language learning. The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy proposed in this study refers to tutors recognising that a learner's autonomy can be part of their teaching strategy.

The notion of a theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy results from a lack of a common theoretical understanding of learner autonomy by reason of its multiple applications in varied contexts. Himel and Pincus (2002) do not use the term theoretical heterogeneity, but they do argue that learner autonomy lacks theoretical homogeneity, for the reason stated. The term theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy is a more concise way of discussing Himel and Pincus' (2002) view.

Terms for three of the four degrees of autonomy already exist, however the configuration of the terms as degrees of learner autonomy with attendant descriptions, explanations and observation criteria are a new contribution. Also new, are the learner autonomy codes which a tutor may use to chart degrees of a learner's autonomy e.g., H HI AD H. The term heteronomy already exists as discussed in Chapter Three, however a fourth degree of learner autonomy 'Heteronomous Independence', and learner heteronomy, are new contributions made through this research.

This study contributes evidence to Benson's (2013) second hypotheses that learners who lack autonomy, can develop it given appropriate conditions and preparations. The ALC allows tutors to provide the appropriate conditions and preparations for learners who lack autonomy. The degrees of learner autonomy and learner autonomy codes allow for H and HI learners, a means of understanding and analysing their own autonomous behaviours and how they may progress to developing as AD and A learners.

This study contributes to needed current studies on the level of learner autonomy of students on widening participation programmes. The ALC supports tutors to engage learner autonomy for quality HE teaching and learning as well as, realising qualification outcomes. Furthermore, the ALC makes learner autonomy clear and explicit. The study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on learner autonomy and pedagogic strategy. By equipping tutors with a construct, there will be greater cognisance of the role of learner autonomy in tutor-student interaction. In addition, greater cognisance of the potential of learner autonomy to aid the process of teaching and learning, among WP learners in HE.

Finally, this study has debunked an initial assumption about the autonomy of WP learners. The introduction to this study noted that WP learners may struggle with being academically autonomous and therefore need to have their autonomy fostered. By the end of the study there is the realisation that though this may be case, these students do have a type of autonomy which enables them to manage work, home, and study to gain qualifications. There is a pedagogic potential to this autonomy which can be engaged to realise positive HE outcomes.

9.4 Issues and Limitations

This study found that analysing nominal data for abstract concepts such a learner autonomy demonstrated an assumption that all quantitative data represents concrete things. An awareness of this assumption calls for further examination of how abstract concepts are researched to ensure that expectations of concrete forms are not made of abstract forms. This revisits a need for ontological clarity i.e., an overarching perspective of reality; possibly a radical middle when types and methods are combined as argued by Onwuegbuzie (2012).

Another instance for a need for ontological clarity arose with a statement made by a participant during the tutor task which questioned whether heteronomy was part of the process of becoming autonomous or is it indicative of the absence of autonomy? This question is significant as it exemplifies the relationship between methodology and interpretation. Answering this question from a pragmatic point of view, heteronomy may be a part of the process of becoming autonomous. A pragmatic viewpoint recognises the temporal nature of things (Peirce, 1931/58). A learner may be heteronomous for a period, then develop autonomy through engaging with tutor strategies. Thus, the state of heteronomy though indicating an absence of autonomy, also indicates a starting point in the journey towards becoming autonomous.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

The limitations to this study do not affect the warrantability of its findings, though they do inform future research with the ALC.

Tutor numbers in the tutor task

Of six tutors there were no templates for analysis from 2 tutors. Contributions from these tutors may have enriched the data set further.

Student use of the ALC

This study focused on tutor use of the ALC, as it is designed as a pedagogic tool. A student aspect of the ALC could have been provided to students as a self-assessment tool during the study. The ALC is currently in use in practice on the programme as a means of facilitating academic direction following a recent revalidation. Some tutors have found the tutor methods and degrees of learner autonomy useful as a means planning for academic direction and a means of students communicating their engagement with academic direction tasks. A student self-assessment tool based on the tutor evaluative part of the ALC is currently in use on some modules of the Stutch programme.

9.5 Summary and Conclusion to the study

Having established the purpose of the study in Chapter One, a review of HE policy was made to clarify what learner autonomy is as well as its role in the HE teaching and learning relationship. Findings from this review showed that learner autonomy was an expected outcome of HE (Pottering and Lenarcic, 2008; QAA 2014), that there was a reciprocal relationship between the learner, student-centred activity, and the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy (See fig.2.1). Also, that the latter two constituted suitable conditions for engaging learner autonomy. Further identified, was an 'inverse relationship between levels of learner responsibility and autonomous response, and levels of tutor supervison' (page 13); as the learner progresses through the levels, tutor supervision reduced with the expectation that learner autonomy should increase (Dublin Descriptors, 2005; EQF, 2004).

In addition, within the policy review, the role of learner autonomy in the HE learning environment was specified in credits accumulation and transfer (CAT) guidance (SEEC, 2016). This guidance stipulates the setting as the most important dimension in identifying the level at which a learner is studying in HE. Considering that a learner's autonomy is expected to increase as the levels progress, and the setting is to explicitly factor in learners' autonomy, it was surprising to find that professional quality monitoring organisations e.g., UKPSF made no mention of how tutors are to achieve the standards which may hide the importance of setting to a learner's autonomy. This was

evidenced in the findings where three tutors referred to their experiences of undergoing training sessions for the PGCAP (see 8.2 and 8.7). One had autonomy mentioned but not in the way argued by the study, and the other two who had completed their fellowship close to the time of being interviewed for this study, mentioned that the importance of learner autonomy to teaching in HE had not been mentioned throughout the process.

Following the review of literature on learner autonomy in Chapter Three, the research questions were revisited and modified. In addition, the review established that suitable conditions for learner autonomy were internal and external, and the locus of control within the tutor-learner relationship identified the extent to which a learner was autonomous (Ryan and Deci, 2000; Fazey and Fazey, 2001; Weinstein et al., 2013). The more the control was internal to the learner, the more likely they were to be autonomous, however, competence and motivation were necessary for autonomy to achieve desired outcomes. This was exemplified in the findings from the tutor task where a learner chose not to participate in a task due either to limited competence or motivation. Here the autonomy displayed by the learner did not achieve desired outcomes for learning. Reflections on this finding questions whether attendance makes a learner or engagement with learning?

Other findings from the review of literature in Chapter Three, provided justification for the theoretical, epistemological, and ontological positions taken in Chapter Four, including a basis for using Instructional Design Theory for construct design and the FraIM for research design.

The need for an affirmative postmodernist approach had been identified in Chapter One, findings from what tutors do and how learners respond in Chapter Three contributed further to the necessity for this approach. The review of literature drew attention to problems with the theoretical heterogeneity of learner autonomy, being a concept which is identified within a multiplicity of environments (Benson, 2013). This identified learner autonomy as having a pluralistic ontology i.e., existing in multiple spheres of reality including the individual, social and environmental (Soli and Da Silva, 2012). Implications highlighted that, this study was designing and researching for a concept

with a pluralistic ontology. Furthermore, outcomes of the research needed to be relevant to tutor's day to day practices, as the day to day was where the ALC will be used post research, necessitating a pragmatic epistemology. Knowledge outcomes needed to be founded in the day-to-day experiences of the tutors, requiring a practical approach for research which recognised multiple realties. The eclecticism of affirmative postmodernism accommodates a pragmatic epistemology with a pluralist ontology. However, eclecticism raises issues of incompatibility, this was resolved by critical flexibility (Yanchar and Gabbitas, 2011). The requirement by critical flexibility to examine the underlying values of eclectic selections provided a means to address issues of incompatibility.

Instructional Design Theory (IDT) provided a theoretical basis for a construct designed for use within pedagogic practices as it is about how learners learn. IDT was also suitable as it is student-centred following findings from the review of literature, also significant for the locus of control of the learner. Furthermore, IDT accommodates long and short-term goals. In the short term, tutors use the ALC in their day-to-day teaching, building on the long-term goals of increased learner autonomy through the levels. The FraIM was chosen as a mixed methods approach suited to a pragmatic epistemology, exemplified in its applicability as a research framework involving the day-to-day experiences of participants. A strong characteristic of the FraIM was its explicit reference to equality of data. One type of data is not privileged over another, all data are equal (Plowright, 2011). Methods and data in affirmative postmodernist research should be suitable to provide a fair and equitable view of the focus of study (Rosenau, 1992).

The feasibility of the ALC was confirmed by a department wide electronic survey, and a programme based practical tutor task which was followed by interviews. The survey drew on the experience of 25 tutors to gain an understanding of their views of what learner autonomy was, the importance of learner autonomy to HE, and the extent to which aspects of the ALC could realise the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy.

Observation was the main data collection method for the tutor task. None of the drawbacks of being a full participant or an observer-as-participant were apparent.

The use of a double- blind sample strengthened validity and eliminated issues of reactivity as consenting students were not aware of whether they had been selected to the sample for tutor observation, and tutors were not aware of how students on the sample had been evaluated by the researcher. This reduced the possibility of students assuming observation by their tutors beyond their normal tutor-student interaction. As the main research participants, tutors used observation as a means of evaluating degrees of learner autonomy. This limited the issue of personal and procedural reactivity. There were no constraints from potential drawbacks to observation as the setting was the normal day-to-day setting for the programme, there was access to participants by the tutors to do their usual teaching and by the researcher as a member of faculty. The researcher strictly maintained the role of researcher to avoid any conflict which could arise from being both researcher and participant.

Interviews followed as soon as possible after the practical tutor task to increase closeness to data and strengthen the reliability of tutor recall.
Considering the change to the research aim and sub questions, following data collection, the study title was changed from-

'An investigation into developing tutor strategies for fostering autonomy among widening participation students'
to
'Designing and exploring the feasibility of the autonomy in learning construct: An investigation among HE tutors.

This narrowed the study down to the feasibility of the ALC as a strategy.
The Autonomy in Learning Construct (ALC) was proposed as a means of recognising and engaging widening participation students' autonomy in tutor's day to day teaching practices. To achieve this, it was necessary to design the ALC and explore its feasibility. It was important to establish that tutors understood what learner autonomy was, that they could recognise that a learner's autonomy could be a teaching tool for learners i.e., it has a pedagogic potential, and that a construct designed to assist tutors engaging this

potential, would enable tutors draw on learners' autonomy in their day to day teaching practices.

Tutors familiar with learner autonomy view learner autonomous behaviours as active learning strategies, shown by learners who engage in learning, involving proactivity, motivation, independence, decision making, own responsibility for learning and contribution to the learning others. Learner autonomous behaviours can be evaluated using degrees of learner autonomy. There were tutors who needed to develop their understanding of learner autonomy, so it was important to avoid assuming that all tutors understand the nature of learner autonomy.

Tutors recognised the pedagogic potential of learner autonomy as they agreed that the ALC encourages developmental possibilities for learner autonomy, through use of its strategies, its evaluations of degrees of learner autonomy, and provision of a language of description for learner autonomy. Both parts of the ALC were affirmed as engaging learner autonomy. The ALC was recognised as a feasible means of engaging the autonomy of WP learners. Further findings include the degrees of learner autonomy being a means of assessing learner autonomy, in relation to level of study and providing a language of description for learner autonomy.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The ALC is currently in use on the programme as a means of managing academic direction periods where, there is no face-to-face teaching for 1 out of five sessions. Academic direction time tutors allows for tutors to focus on meeting the demands of tight marking turnaround expectations. Students are directed to work independently on a task linked to the teaching sessions covered. Tutors use the ALC to plan these sessions using at least 2 tutor subcomponents

A student self-assessment tool has been devised from the ALC, with statements based on the 4 degrees of learner autonomy, by which learners evaluate their own levels of

autonomy in carrying out academic direction tasks. This feedback is valuable to the programme in adjudging student engagement during academic direction periods,

Furthermore, there are discussions on using the learner autonomy codes as a means of students self-evaluating their response to developing graduate attributes through the course.

Chapter Ten- Reflexive Account

My doctoral research journey has been both challenging and intriguing. Having spent a period with a different HE, restarting and completing the process constitutes a significant achievement. The time taken has had a significant impact on my writing and thinking, on reflection there is a growing progression which has also had an impact on my work within an HE environment. It has been quite a challenge to see many colleagues start and complete their doctoral programmes, yet my journey appeared to continually extend. Initially, I questioned myself, my beliefs and my writing and realised that a loss of confidence in how I wrote, thought, and at certain points, even spoke, would not help me complete my doctoral journey.

I decided on a change of mind, to find ways to make more time to meet deadlines and dig deep for some internal resilience to help complete this journey. Bearing in mind that I worked full time, combining a part time job at an HEI and a semi full time job as proprietor of an alternative provision school, setting aside time to just focus on study was problematic. My younger daughter joined a gymnastics club which required her to attend a gym on a Saturday for 6 hours. This meant I could attend a HEI library nearby and have a set time to for study. Making use of opportunities like this meant I could recover time to read, write, and not only put words to paper, but to enjoy my research, ask myself questions and reflect on what I was writing.

Another challenge for me on this doctoral journey was finding a research structure that was suitable to my discipline and accessible. I felt a bit overwhelmed and struggled for a while to find a suitable research structure. My writing felt open and fluid and after writing and constantly deleting, I decided to reflect on what exactly was wrong with my ‘structure’. In the early days of writing, I came across Bernstein’s ideas on code theory, and Maton who extended code theory to legitimation code theory by ‘standing on the shoulders of giants. Reading their work introduced me to a new way of thinking. Ideas from code theory enabled me to find a shorthand for an abstract concept such as learner autonomy. This was useful in creating and developing my proposal for degrees of

autonomy and further on the ALC. Most importantly, it helped my confidence and facilitated the change of place of study. The abstract concepts I had devised become bounded and real. Nearing the end of my journey, I published a chapter in a book called Exploring Children's Learning edited by Christine Ritchie. Here my chapter (Chapter 3) is a proposal of my ideas on critical learner theory. Writing about critical learners enabled explore the different contexts within which learner autonomy would apply. This led to a publication of the abductive part of my ideas on degrees of learner autonomy, as well as write about learner autonomy from a critical learner perspective.

Another structure which helped with the empirical research was the FraIM. I recollect discussing my research with my elder daughter where she asked me what my independent and dependent variables were. I recollect a wave of panic as I realised I had no variables of any ilk. My daughter's question raised a methodology question for me. Following which I signed up for an SPSS programme. This gave me an insight into types of data, what my data was likely to be, and what the expectations were around what is considered rigorous data. The sessions were lessons on how to use SPSS to manage and manipulate quantitative data. I was able to see how what data I would need to collect and what approaches may not be necessary.

Using the FraIM resolved the questions I had from engaging with SPSS. The FraIM challenges among other things, assumptions about what data should be used, what is acceptable and not acceptable, and challenges making choices, for example based on what will impress. My conclusion to this was my interest is in the research, not in doing what everyone else does. The FraIM provided the research structure I needed to engage my research. The author's emphasis that all data is equal, suggested a familiar quote which I mentally adapted to "All data is equal; and none are more equal than others". This adapted quote provided a reminder to critically reflect on reasons why my data was best for my research intentions. It also enabled my guard against getting lost in procedures which appeared rigorous but were in fact unnecessary for what I was looking to achieve.

In the final analysis, doctoral research has been one of the most challenging, frustrating, depressing, elating, and self-examining projects I have ever, and ever will undertake. The irony is that I have devised a means to foster and evaluate degrees of learner autonomy

and can accurately say that I have evaluated myself as each of the degrees of autonomy at one point or the other on this doctoral research trip. So, following a self-evaluation, will sign off with my doctoral research learner autonomy code:

-A H HH HI AD and A.

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Appendices

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Learner Autonomy implications within the Bologna Process from Sorbonne to Yerevan 1998- 2015.

1998 Sorbonne Declaration	1999 Bologna Declaration	2001 Prague Communiqué	2003 Berlin Communiqué	2005 Bergen Communiqué	2007 London Communiqué	2009 Leuven/ Louvain-la-Neuve Communique	2012 Bucharest Communiqué	2015 Yerevan Communiqué
Mobility of students and teachers	Mobility also for researchers and administrative staff	Social dimension of mobility	Portability of loans and grants	Attention to visa and work permits	Attention also to pension systems and recognition	Benchmark of 20 % by 2020 for student mobility	Explore path to automatic recognition of academic qualifications	Implementation of key commitments
A common two-cycle degree system	Easily readable and comparable degrees	Fair recognition Development of joint degrees	Inclusion of doctoral level as third cycle	QF-EHEA adopted National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs) launched	NQFs by 2010	NQFs by 2012	Roadmaps for countries without NQF	Implementation of key commitments
		Social dimension	Equal access	Reinforcement of the social dimension	Commitment to national action plans	National targets for the social dimension to be measured by 2020	Widening access and completion rates	Social inclusion
		Lifelong learning (LLL)	Alignment of national LLL policies Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	Flexible learning paths	Partnerships to improve employability	LLL as a public responsibility Focus on employability	Enhance employability, LLL and entrepreneurial skills through cooperation with employers	Employability
Use of credits	A system of credits (ECTS)	ECTS and Diploma Supplement (DS)	ECTS for credit accumulation		Coherent use of tools and recognition practices	Implementation of Bologna tools	Ensure that Bologna tools are based on learning outcomes	Adoption of ECTS Users Guide
	European cooperation in quality assurance (QA)	Cooperation between QA and recognition professionals	QA at institutional, national and European level	European Standards and Guidelines for quality assurance (ESG) adopted	Creation of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR)	Quality as an overarching focus for EHEA	Allow EQAR registered agencies to perform their activities across the EHEA	Adoption of revised ESG and European Approach to QA of joint programmes
Europe of Knowledge	European dimensions in HE	Attractiveness of the EHEA	Links between HE and research areas	International cooperation on the basis of values and sustainable development	Strategy to improve the global dimension of the Bologna Process adopted	Enhance global policy dialogue through Bologna Policy Fora	Evaluate implementation of 2007 global dimension strategy	
								Learning and Teaching: Relevance and quality

Appendix 2. The 2004 Dublin Descriptors (Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation, 2005)

SHORT CYCLE QUALIFICATION (within or linked to the first cycle)	FIRST CYCLE	SECOND CYCLE	THIRD CYCLE
Qualifications that signify completion of the higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) are awarded to students who: ■ have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon general secondary education and is typically at a level supported by advanced textbooks; such knowledge provides an underpinning for a field of work or vocation, personal development, and further studies to complete the first cycle; ■ can apply their knowledge and understanding in occupational contexts; ■ have the ability to identify and use data to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems; ■ can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients; ■ have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy.	***Qualifications that signify completion of the first cycle are awarded to students who:*** ■ have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge of the forefront of their field of study; ■ can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have competences typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study; ■ have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to inform judgements that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues; ■ can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences; ■ have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy.	***Qualifications that signify completion of the second cycle are awarded to students who:*** ■ have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends and/or enhances that typically associated with the first cycle, and that provides a basis or opportunity for originality in developing and/or applying ideas, often within a research context; ■ can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study; ■ have the ability to integrate knowledge and handle complexity, and formulate judgements with incomplete or limited information, but that include reflecting on social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of their knowledge and judgements; ■ can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously; ■ have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.	***Qualifications that signify completion of the third cycle are awarded to students who:*** ■ have demonstrated a systematic understanding of a field of study and mastery of the skills and methods of research associated with that field; ■ have demonstrated the ability to conceive, design, implement and adapt a substantial process of research with scholarly integrity; ■ have made a contribution through original research that extends the frontier of knowledge by developing a substantial body of work, some of which merits national or international refereed publication; ■ are capable of critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas; ■ can communicate with their peers, the larger scholarly community and with society in general about their areas of expertise; ■ can be expected to be able to promote, within academic and professional contexts, technological, social or cultural advancement in a knowledge based society.

Appendix 3: The role of learner autonomy in descriptors for life-long learning skills according to the EQF

Learner autonomy in EQF descriptors for lifelong learning skills

Adapted from Descriptors defining levels in the European Qualifications Framework

EQF Level	**Expectation of learner autonomy and responsibility**
Level one*: basic skills required to carry out simple tasks*	To work or study under direct supervision in a structured context.
Level two*: basic cognitive and practical skills required to use relevant information in order to carry out tasks and to solve routine problems using simple rules and tools*	To work or study under supervision with some autonomy.
Level three*: a range of cognitive and practical skills required to accomplish tasks and solve problems by selecting and applying basic methods, tools, materials and information*	To take responsibility for completion of tasks in work or study and adapt own behaviour to circumstances in solving problems.
Level four*: a range of cognitive and practical skills required to generate solutions to specific problems in a field of work or study*	To exercise self-management within the guidelines of work or study contexts that are usually predictable, but are subject to change, supervise the routine work of others, taking some responsibility for the evaluation and improvement of work or study activities.
Level five: *a comprehensive range of cognitive and practical skills required to develop creative solutions to abstract problems*	To exercise management and supervision in contexts of work or study activities where there is unpredictable change, review and develop performance of self and others.
Level six: *advanced skills, demonstrating mastery and innovation, required to solve complex and unpredictable problems in a specialised field of work or study*	To manage complex technical or professional activities or projects, taking responsibility for decision-making in unpredictable work or study contexts, and take responsibility for managing professional development of individuals and groups
Level seven: *specialised problem-solving skills required in research and/or innovation in order to develop new knowledge and procedures and to integrate knowledge from different fields*	To manage and transform work or study contexts that are complex, unpredictable and require new strategic approaches and take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams.
Level eight: *the most advanced and specialised skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve critical problems in research and/or innovation and to extend and redefine existing knowledge or professional practice*	To demonstrate substantial authority, innovation, autonomy, scholarly and professional integrity and sustained commitment to the development of new ideas or processes at the forefront of work or study contexts including research.

Appendix 4 Extract of assessment criteria of the four stands of quality in teaching and learning

Aspect of Quality Areas of teaching and learning quality	**Reference**	**Criterion**
Teaching Quality	Student Engagement (TQ1)	Teaching provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies
	Valuing Teaching (TQ2)	Institutional culture facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching
	Rigour and Stretch (TQ3)	Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential
	Feedback (TQ4)	Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment
Learning Environment	Resources (LE1)	Physical and digital resources are used effectively to aid students' learning and the development of independent study and research skills Scholarship, Research and Professional practice.
	Practice (LE2)	The learning environment is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice
	Personalised Learning (LE3)	Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention, attainment and progression
Student Outcomes and Learning Gain	Employment and Further Study (SO1)	Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment
	Employability and Transferable Skills (SO2)	Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives
	Positive Outcomes for All (SO3)	Positive outcomes are achieved by its students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds or those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes

Appendix 5 UK Australia Comparison

A comparison expected outcomes of specifying learner autonomy in HE qualifications between the UK and the Australian HE qualifications frameworks up to Doctoral level

Summary of qualification descriptors by the UK Quality Code for HE qualifications (2014)	**Qualification descriptors by the Australian Qualifications Framework (2013) Level Criteria for Application of Knowledge and Skills**
Holders of a Certificate of HE will have a sound knowledge of the basic concepts of a subject, and will have learned how to take different approaches to solving problems. They will be able to communicate accurately and will have the qualities needed for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility. The Certificate of HE may be a first step towards obtaining higher level qualifications. (Page 21) **UK Level 4 Certificate in HE**	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility in known or changing contexts and within broad but established parameters. Graduates of a Diploma will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: • with depth in some areas of specialisation, in known or changing contexts • to transfer and apply theoretical concepts and/or technical and/or creative skills in a range of situations • with personal responsibility and autonomy in performing complex technical operations with responsibility for own outputs in relation to broad parameters for quantity and quality • with initiative and judgement to organise the work of self and others and plan, coordinate and evaluate the work of teams within broad but generally well-defined parameters (Page 38 -39) **Australia Level 5 Diploma qualifications**
Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to: • use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis • effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively • undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations. And holders will have: • the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making.	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, judgement and defined responsibility: • in contexts that are subject to change • within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions Graduates of an Advanced Diploma will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: • with depth in areas of specialisation, in contexts subject to change • with initiative and judgment in planning, design, technical or management functions with some direction • to adapt a range of fundamental principles and complex techniques to known and unknown situations • across a broad range of technical or management functions with accountability for personal outputs and personal and team outcomes within broad parameters

The foundation degree is an example of a qualification that meets, in full, the expectations of the qualification descriptor (and the Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark). Holders of qualifications at this level will have developed a sound understanding of the principles in their field of study, and will have learned to apply those principles more widely. Through this, they will have learned to evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems. Their studies may well have had a vocational orientation, for example HNDs, enabling them to perform effectively in their chosen field. Holders of qualifications at this level will have the qualities necessary for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making. (Page 23) **UK Level 5 Foundation degree**	(Page 41- 42) **Australia Level 6 Diploma qualifications**
No UK Equivalent	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and responsibility: • in contexts that require self-directed work and learning • within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions Graduates of a Bachelor Degree will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: • with initiative and judgement in planning, problem solving and decision making in professional practice and/or scholarship • to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts • with responsibility and accountability for own learning and professional practice and in collaboration with others within broad parameters (Page 47- 48) **Australia Level 7 Bachelor degree**
Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to: • apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects • critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement, adaptability and responsibility as a practitioner or learner Graduates of a Bachelor Honours Degree will demonstrate the application of knowledge and skills: • with initiative and judgement in professional practice and/or scholarship

to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem • communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences. And holders will have: • the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring: - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature. Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours will have developed an understanding of a complex body of knowledge, some of it at the current boundaries of an academic discipline. Through this, the holder will have developed analytical techniques and problem-solving skills that can be applied in many types of employment. The holder of such a qualification will be able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, to reach sound judgements and to communicate them effectively. Holders of a bachelor's degree with honours should have the qualities needed for employment in situations requiring the exercise of personal responsibility, and decision-making in complex and unpredictable circumstances. (Page 26) **UK Level 6 Bachelor's degree with honours**	• to adapt knowledge and skills in diverse contexts • with responsibility and accountability for own learning and practice and in collaboration with others within broad parameters • to plan and execute project work and/or a piece of research and scholarship with some independence (Page 50- 51) **Australia Level 8 bachelor's degree with honours**

Appendix 6 UK HE Professional teaching standards

UK HE Professional Teaching Standards

Areas of Activity A1. Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study A2. Teach and/or support learning A3. Assess and give feedback to learners A4. Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance A5. Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices
Core Knowledge K1. The subject material K2. Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme K3. How students learn, both generally and within their subject/disciplinary area(s) K4. The use and value of appropriate learning technologies K5. Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching K6. The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching
Professional Values V1. Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities V2. Promote participation in HE and equality of opportunity for learners V3. Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development V4. Acknowledge the wider context in which HE operates recognising the implications for professional practice

Appendix 7 Gagne et al. (1992) Principles of Instructional Design

Five Kinds of Learned Capabilities

Capability	***Examples of Performance***
Intellectual Skill	Identifying the diagonal of a rectangle Demonstrating use of objective case of pronoun following a preposition.
Cognitive Strategy	Using an image link for learn a foreign equivalent to an English word. Rearranging a verbally stated problem by working backward.
Verbal Information	Stating the provisions of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
Motor Skill	Planing the edge of a board Printing the letter E
Attitude	Choosing to read science fiction Choosing running as a regular form of exercise

Appendix 8 Detailed Observation Criteria

Observation Criteria

A-Student shows they can organise and direct self, using own strategies for learning and relating with others when carrying out this task.

a) Initiates action
b) Student participates verbally answering and asking pertinent questions relating to knowledge for all
c) Engages actively in group tasks
d) Completes post session tasks
e) Brings information deemed relevant into the session
f) Avoids distraction
g) Tends to lead
h) Listens actively

AD- Student shows they can organise and direct self to learn, and adopt any strategies needed from the tutor and others when carrying out this task

a) Responds to action
b) Student participates verbally answering and asking pertinent questions relating to knowledge for all
c) Engages responsively in group tasks
d) Completes post session tasks
e) Avoids distraction
f) May lead, may also follow
g) Listens actively

H- Student prefers to be directed in carrying out this task by receiving instructions from tutor and/others and employs their strategies.

a) May responds to action
b) Does not participate verbally unless directly requested, gives minimal response
c) Tend to leave action to others during group tasks, may listen, rarely contributes
d) Tends not to complete post session tasks
e) May be distracted by own thoughts, electronic gadgets
f) Tends to follow
g) Listens passively (may appear disinterested though listening)

HI- Student shows they can organise and direct self in carrying out this task and requires confirmation from tutor on choices made/ strategies used.

a) Responds to action
b) Student participates verbally asking questions about own progress rather than knowledge for all
c) Engages responsively in group tasks
d) Completes post session tasks
e) Avoids distraction
f) Tends to follow
g) Listens actively most of the time

Appendix 9 Tutor Observation template

Degree of learner autonomy template- students' general response

A- Student shows they can organise and direct self, using own strategies for learning and relating with others when carrying out this task.

AD- Student shows they can organise and direct self to learn, and adopt any strategies needed from the tutor and others when carrying out this task

H- Student prefers to be directed in carrying out this task by receiving instructions from tutor and/others and employs their strategies.

HI- Student shows they can organise and direct self in carrying out this task and requires confirmation from tutor on choices made/ strategies used.

How learner engaged in activity during the session				
Please place the student using a tick √	A	AD	H	HI
Student A				
Student B				
Student C				
Student D				
Student E				
Student F				
Student G				
Student H				

Appendix 10. Ethics Clearance

Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)

From Dr Louise Westmarland

The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee HREC/2588/Ladenika

Email louise.westmarland@open.ac.uk

Extension (6) 52462

To Temi Ladenika

Project title An investigation into developing tutor strategies for fostering autonomy among widening participation students

HREC ref

AMS ref

Memorandum

Date application submitted: 10/07/2017

Date of HREC response: 17/07/2017

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given a favourable opinion by HREC Chair's action.

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review, so they can be recorded and a favourable opinion given prior to any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is or may be effected).

3. Please include your HREC reference number in any documents or correspondence, also any publicity seeking participants or advertising your research, so it is clear that it has been reviewed by HREC and adheres to OU ethics review processes.

4. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.

5. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and where they exist, their frameworks for research ethics.

6. At the conclusion of your project, by the date you have stated in your application, you are required to provide the Committee with a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-reviewprocess-and-proforma#final_report

Best regards

Dr Louise Westmarland

The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/January 2017

INVITE LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (HE Students)

SCES

Canterbury Christ Church University

Medway

Chatham Martime

ME4 4QU

Contact address via Email: temi.ladenika@canterbury.ac.uk

Date: 24th May 2017

Participant address/email address

Dear Fd/BA Childhood Studies Student

I am currently an EdD (Education) researcher, with the Open University, and would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I plan to undertake.

The overall aim of my study is to provide a greater understanding of the importance of tutors fostering learner autonomy and the development of a strategy in the form of the Autonomy in Learning Construct to assist with this.

The purpose of this part of my research process is to gather information on tutor views of learner autonomy. This will involve an observation of the whole group, followed by tutors evaluating responses of a small sample of students in your group to certain strategies they provide during the sessions.

If you would not like your responses to be observed or evaluated please ignore the consent form provided. If you would not mind participating please fill out the consent form provided.

I will then be grateful for an opportunity to observe an instance of your usual teaching and learning interaction with your tutor.

Evaluations will be made of student participation in either two or three activities. This will be part of your normal session and only the responses of a small sample of students will be evaluated.

You will not be required to provide any information. The focus of the research activity is in the tutor activity.

Throughout the research process, data that is collected will be anonymised, so that if your data becomes a part of the sample, you cannot be identified in the research study or any publication e.g., instead of using your actual name, a fictitious name would be used. Data will be collected using manual and electronic methods and secured appropriately e.g., in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected USB storage drive.

A summary of the research study will also be made available to you, on request to me.

Subject to the safeguards mentioned above, as the author of this research I will retain the right to use the information and data that has been collected, in the research study, and publications such as academic journals.

You will have the right to withdraw from the research process at any time and a debrief will also be offered. If you decide to withdraw, any data gathered relating to you will be destroyed.

If you decide to withdraw from the research process then please let me know via email by the 31st of July 2017.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research study at any time, please contact the Ms Carmel Collins, Research Ethics Manager, Research Ethics at the OU, carmel.collins@open.ac.uk Tel: 01908 654858

I do hope you will participate in the research study and if you decide to do so, will you please complete the Participant Consent Form attached below.

Many thanks and I look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully

Temi Ladenika

Doctoral Researcher Open University

Senior Lecturer CCCU

Enc: Participant Consent Form

INVITE LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS (HE LECTURERS)

SCES
Canterbury Christ Church University
Medway
Chatham Martime
ME4 4QU
Contact address via Email: temi.ladenika@canterbury.ac.uk

Date: 24th May 2017

Participant address/email address

Dear Colleague

I am currently an EdD (Education) researcher, with the Open University, and would like to invite you to participate in a research study that I plan to undertake.

The overall aim of my study is to provide a greater understanding of the importance of tutors fostering learner autonomy and the development of a strategy in the form of the Autonomy in Learning Construct to assist with this.

The purpose of this part of my research process is to gather information and the respective views of participants, in relation to tutor views of the importance of learner autonomy for graduateness as well as of engaging learner autonomy in their teaching practices

It is hoped that practitioners will enjoy reflecting, and talking about their professional background, their views of how HE learners learn as well as the pedagogic processes they find necessary for teaching. It is anticipated that the research will highlight themes emanating from the study that could be of value to practitioners and policy makers in Higher Education and of interest to the wider research community.

If you decide to participate, I will arrange an initial welcome discussion with you to re-confirm and clarify the contents of this letter.

I will then be grateful for an opportunity to observe an instance of your normal teaching interaction with your students i.e., session 1 of your module. Your students will also be invited to participate and this may take place only with consent from both you and them.

It is anticipated that these two activities will amount to approximately one hour and forty minutes of your time in total at a mutually convenient date, time and venue.

Throughout the research process, data that is collected will be anonymised, so that you cannot be identified in the research study or any publication e.g., instead of using your actual name, a fictitious name would be used. Data will be collected using manual and electronic methods and secured appropriately e.g., in a locked filing cabinet and on a password-protected USB storage drive.

The process will also provide you with the opportunity to retain and read any information that you have provided e.g., transcripts of the interview, with the opportunity to make amendments.

A summary of the research study will also be made available to you, on request to me.

Subject to the safeguards mentioned above, as the author of this research I will retain the right to use the information and data that has been collected, in the research study, and publications such as academic journals.

You will have the right to withdraw from the research process at any time and a debrief will also be offered. If you decide to withdraw, then information provided by you will be destroyed.

If you decide to withdraw from the research process then please let me know via email by the 31st of July 2017

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research study at any time, please contact the Ms Carmel Collins, Research Ethics Manager, Research Ethics at the OU, carmel.collins@open.ac.uk Tel: 01908 654858

I do hope you will participate in the research study and if you decide to do so, will you please complete the Participant Consent Form attached below.

Many thanks and I look forward to meeting you.

Yours faithfully

Temi Ladenika
Doctoral Researcher Open University
Senior Lecturer CCCU

Enc: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form-

Investigating the use of Autonomy Support Strategies among Higher Education tutors

Agreement to Participate

I, _____(print name) agree to take part in this research project.

I have had the purposes of the research project explained to me.

I have been informed that I may refuse to participate at any point by simply saying so by the 31st of July 2017

I have been assured that my confidentiality will be protected as specified in the letter/leaflet.

I agree that the information that I provide can be used for educational or research purposes, including publication.

I understand that if I have any concerns or difficulties I can contact: Temi Ladenika at RWs18 Medway Campus temi.ladenika@canterbury.ac.uk

If I want to talk to someone else about this project, I can contact David Plowright at: David.Plowright@open.ac.uk

I assign the copyright for my contribution to the Faculty for use in education, research and publication.

Signed: Date:

Appendix 11 Survey Questions

Survey - Tutor Strategies and Learner Autonomy

Page 1: Strategies for Learner Autonomy and Higher Education

Thank you for taking part in this survey. The purpose of this study is to explore tutor perceptions of the importance of learner autonomy in higher education

By filling out this questionnaire you provide signed consent to participation in this research. You may change your mind about participation at any point by stating so in an email to temi.ladenika@canterbury.ac.uk by the 31 of July 2017. To facilitate this you will create a code within the survey that will enable you to withdraw. The code does not affect your anonymity.

Your confidentiality will be protected following ethical guidelines as laid out in the BERA Ethical Guidelines 2011.

The information that you provide will be used for educational or research purposes, including publication. For any concerns or difficulties please contact temi.ladenika@canterbury.ac.uk

If you want to talk to someone else about this project, please contact David Plowright at: David.Plowright@open.ac.uk

Thanks once again, your participation is highly valued.

1. Please create an ID for yourself, in case you later wish to withdraw your data, this will enable you to do so. Please write the first two letters from the name of your secondary school and the year you started teaching in HE in the box below.

2. Please select your gender

   Female

   Male

   Prefer not to say

3. For how long have you been teaching in Higher Education? (Optional)
   3 years or less
   4 – 8 years
   8 – 12 years
   Over 12 years

4. Please type in your disciplinary area e.g., Childhood Studies, Engineering, etc

5) Please select as many statements below as in your view describe learner autonomy.
   a. Independence in learning
   b. Knowing when to ask for guidance
   c. Having a proactive approach to learning
   d. Accepting responsibility for both positive and negative outcomes
   e. Being responsible for own actions

f. Needing to understand before taking action
g. Complying with requirements
h. Being in charge of own decisions
i. Having a reactive approach to learning
j. Knowing what to do to get results
k. Depending on tutor guidance for all aspects of learning
l. Considering learning needs of self and others
m. Expectation for others to provide guidance
n. Requiring affirmation of action to be confident of choices made
o. Being able to communicate concerns effectively
p. Expecting others to be accountable when own goals are not achieved
q. Other……..

6) Please select as many of the following that you consider to be the key functions of a university education
    a. Cultivating students by contributing to their personal growth
    b. Contribution to knowledge through research
    c. Teaching students at HE levels
    d. Preparation of students for professional life
    e. Development of lifelong learning attitudes among students
    f. Intellectual, cultural, social, ethical and personal transformation
    g. Development in students of a practical ability to apply theory through reflective thinking

7) Do you consider learner autonomy important to the facilitation of **all** of the key functions of a University education as outlined above? Yes (please go to number 8) No (pls go to number 7a
    If not please give reasons…….

7a) Do you consider learner autonomy important to the facilitation of **some** of the key functions of a University education as outlined above? Yes No
    If yes please identify which ones (e.g., t, s and q) ……

8) Do you consider the use of autonomy support strategies important? Yes No
    If no, please give reasons……
    ……
    If Yes please answer 8a below

8a) Please give some examples of autonomy support strategies that you use regularly e.g., tasks which involve students making decisions
……..

9) Do you agree that being autonomous indicates the difference between a university graduate and a non- graduate? Yes No
    Please give reasons for your answer
    ……

10) Which of the following do you consider useful learner autonomy support strategies? Please select as many as you agree with.

a. Tasks involving critical reflection
b. Attending sessions
c. Encouraging student contribution to sessions
d. Following the power point
e. Tutorials
f. Encouraging student consideration of the learning needs of others
g. Decision making tasks
h. Independent activity tasks
i. Asking questions
j. Thinking tasks

11. Learner autonomy is important for student engagement in terms of effective stimulation challenge engagement and active commitment
    Yes
    NO
    Please give reasons for your answer
12. Learner autonomy is important to the effective introduction of rigour and stretch to develop independence, skills, knowledge and understanding that enables the development of full student potential

    Yes
    NO
    Please give reasons for your answer

13. Learner autonomy is important to student action on tutor feedback which supports students development progress and attainment
    Yes
    NO
    Please give reasons for your answer

14. Learner autonomy is important to the use and development of independent research skills using physical and digital resources
    Yes
    NO
    Please give reasons for your answer

15. Learner autonomy is important to the development of student scholarship, research and professional practice
    Yes
    NO
    Please give reasons for your answer

Appendix 12 Tutor Task guidance

1. Drawing up a sample

I will observe the group during the first session and allocate members of the group to each of the four 'degrees of autonomy' categories. From these, 2 or 4 students representing each category in line with the overall size of the group are selected for a sample.

Session 1: Students read and signed the consent form. They are informed that the research is about teaching strategies and how learner responses may be assessed. It will be clarified that they are not the focus of the research but data on tutor activity will be gathered during their session and this will involve their responses to tasks. TL observes during the session and provides a sample to the participating tutor.

2. Participating Tutor's initial assessment of student response

Session 2:

Tutor provides a learning task e.g., pre-session reading or in-session activity 2. Please assess the response of students in the sample provided, to the learning activity, using the **tutor observation template.** Indicate where you feel each student is, in relation to the response statements under A AD H or HI (see below).

3. Participating Tutor uses the elements of the conceptual device in planning and assessment of learner autonomy

Session 3 and 4:

Tutor designs an activity ensuring that at least two of the elements are represented. Tutor then observes the responses of the students and indicates the level of autonomy with which they perceive the sample students are responding, using the tutor observation template.

Please provide two activities based on a problem/need. Tasks in each activity need to be linked to at least two of the following six conceptual device elements. One activity would be set during a morning session before lunch, set after lunch during an afternoon

session. If teaching twilights, both activities will be during the evening. Each activity should last for 40 mins.

At the end of each session please assess the response of students in the sample provided to the learning activity using the tutor observation template**.** Indicate where you feel each student is in relation to the response statements under A AD H or HI (see below)

Tutor strategies: Thinking (1), Critical reflection (2), Independent action (3), Decision making (4), Contributing to the learning of others (5), Considering the learning of others (6)

Degrees of Autonomy – Autonomous (A), Autonomous Dependent (AD), Heteronomous (H), Heteronomous Independent (HI)

A- Student shows they can organise and direct self, using own strategies for learning and relating with others when carrying out this task.

AD- Student shows they can organise and direct self to learn, and adopt any strategies needed from the tutor and others when carrying out this task

H- Student prefers to be directed in carrying out this task by receiving instructions from tutor and/others and employs their strategies.

HI- Student shows they can organise and direct self in carrying out this task and requires confirmation from tutor on choices made/ strategies used.

Tutor reflection and interview

Please prepare a very brief reflection (500 words or less) on your experience of engaging with autonomy support strategies using the elements and categories, in lieu of an interview. In the interest of mediation i.e., the distance between data in researcher (in time and space), interviews need to take place as soon as possible after the second Part B template 2 assessment.

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this research study

Appendix 13 Interview questions translated into themes for analysis of findings

Interview Questions	Themes
Q1. How long have you been teaching in HE?	Background information
Q2. Do you think recognising learner autonomy important in HE? Please give reasons.	learner autonomy and HE Pedagogic potential of LA
Q3. To what extent do you agree that the tutor has a part to play in engaging learner autonomy?	The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy
Q4. Please comment on your experience of engaging with the ALC	The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy
Q5. Prior to participating in this study, would you normally actively consider engaging learner autonomy when planning for teaching sessions?	The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy
Q6. Which of the elements of the ALC did you consider when planning for your sessions?	The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy
Q7. Did your consideration of these elements focus your attention learner autonomy more than usual?	The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy
Q8. Are the typologies of learner autonomy familiar to you?	What learner autonomy is
Q9. To what extent in your view do these typologies describe varying degrees of autonomy?	What learner autonomy is
Q10. Based on your experience, do you think the ALC would assist a tutor new to HE in engaging learner autonomy?	The pedagogic potential of learner autonomy

Appendix14: Level of Agreement that Learner Autonomy makes a difference between a graduate and a non- graduate

	Agree	Disagree
1	HE should enable personal, social and emotional emancipation. It also requires cognitive/intellectual independence acquired through learning/teaching of academic rigour and critique of criteria	I think that you can be autonomous as a non-graduate through life experiences, although I acknowledge that pupils who may have studied at schools in Britain are likely to not have had the opportunity to develop as autonomous learners.
2	Undergraduates need experiences and opportunities to learn knowledge, skills and aptitudes for autonomous learning	I think there should be degrees of autonomy in all learning from birth onwards! (E.g., child-initiated play at pre-school has elements of autonomy.)
3	Because the process is as important as the outcomes. HE must encourage higher level thinking i.e., question everything. You can be autonomous in non-graduate professions too such as Plumbing, but you may not be a critical thinker.	Primary children are developed as autonomous - it would therefore be ridiculous to expect learners to lose this before they got to university!
4	Autonomy demonstrates an element of mastery that should come from a university education- the ability to be able to act as an independent motivated professional	Not everyone goes to university. It would be arrogant and misinformed to regard all non-graduates as automatons.
5	A university graduate should be an independent learner.	You can be a graduate and not be an autonomous learner
6		This is far too general a question and implies that non -graduates are necessarily not autonomous learners. Research indicates that not all graduates are genuinely autonomous, and the converse is also true.
7		There are many reasons why people don't graduate. And there are many autonomous people who aren't in university.
8		Many school students are very autonomous in their attitudes to learning.
9		I am sure that many non-graduates are capable of being autonomous. I believe that graduates are, though, more likely to be autonomous.
10		There are levels of autonomy - I would expect every adult to be developing autonomy whether a graduate or not.
11		there are lots of other differences
12		No - I was autonomous in my learning when in professional practice and was not a graduate at that time. What I learnt as a university student was to exert my autonomy more, this developed in part to the acquisition of knowledge and to question knowledge - by understanding my ecological learning system - to appreciate when I was motivated to autonomy and why on occasion I was happy to be led in my learning. Both occurred - independence and dependence. However I think that universities while lauding the concept of autonomy actually squash or are threatened by autonomy - for example learning outcomes are not

		autonomous and are created for the learner.... could learners create their own learning outcomes - I think so.... would the university permit this?
13		You don't need a university degree to be autonomous.
14		One would hope H/E would help but it depends on other life experiences too - not one or the other really. A 'good' H/E experience should theoretically develop autonomous learners but not in the current climate of the market and outcome driven agendas -
15		Doesn't necessarily rely on a 'tick list' of skill attributes. Many professional skill sets could require autonomous working, developed through a non-academic, practical solution requirement.

Appendix 15 Learner Autonomy is important for student engagement

	Agree	**Disagree**
1	Autonomy for me links with authorship and this in turn leads to my view that every learner is morally and intellectually responsible for his/her own learning; however, this does not mean that the learner does not liaise/discuss learning with the tutor.	Learner autonomy enables an individual to complete work and tasks and may contribute to motivation but I believe engagement is the result of characteristics of the tutor which hopefully inspire- which generates engagement success confidence and autonomy
2	Learner autonomy means contributing to the conditions for learning. Therefore, participation is a necessary element. Engagement to me means willingness to share with others	
3	I agree with this statement, as I believe that autonomous learners may be more likely to be motivated and dedicated students.	
4	This supports their approach to lifelong learning	
5	My students who are mainly teachers studying part time MAs and Ed.D choose the focus for their own learning within generic assignment briefs. As well as this being motivating, it has been linked to greater impact on learning and teaching (see Cordingley et al.,)	
6	Because learner autonomy is a shared responsibility and it's about working together to enable the learner to be able to learn effectively with and without guidance using a variety of tools	
7	These are all attributes identified in studies on learner autonomy.	
8	Any one of the three elements can be addressed without autonomy, but all 3 together require independence of thought and action.	
9	There is a relationship between autonomy and the ability to think critically	
10	Countless research shows this, Race, Dewey, Brookfield, Neary, loads more...	
11	It is more likely to lead to students being willing to attempt challenging tasks	
12	They came here seeking something- knowledge for a job, growth, etc. They bear a responsibility in the learning and teaching dynamic. Learning is active, not passive, and requires a commitment to the process.	
13	Teachers should aim to inspire students to love learning as much as they do.	
14	It is essential that learners are encouraged not just to give answers but to ask questions. I believe that asking questions is essential to develop criticality which is part of the skill of fully and intelligently engaging with the subject	
15	Learners who are autonomous are intrinsically motivated to developing their own practice rather than simply carrying out the wishes of a tutor.	

16	Genuine learning is more likely to occur if the person takes ownership and responsibility for their engagement and thus learning	
17	We should not be preventing creative thinking by capping expectations on what our students can and can't do as learners	
18	Autonomy and independent learning does not mean doing things in isolation or on your own - autonomy occurs through group learning processes, engagement is more than attendance - you can be present in body but not in mind. Student engagement is too narrowly assessed - constructed by the university.	
19	it is the essence of engagement!	
20	Students need to be challenged in order to be engaged and understand their role in the learning process.	
21	Without it the student gets the tutor's view/vision, is not motivated to 'find an answer' and does not develop their own practice through an evaluation of their research.	

Appendix 16 Development of student scholarship, research, and professional practice

Agree	**Disagree**
Professional practice can be enhanced through learner autonomy; however, there are numerous points of conflict between independent thinking/suggesting new ideas and submitting to the requirements of professional practice standards.	
I think that learner autonomy supports students' scholarship and research in particularly. I think there might be conflicts sometimes between students developing learner autonomy and being able to act out that autonomy in their professional roles, due to the constraints they may face due to policy, managers and their workplace.	
If they develop autonomy, then their motivation and attitude changes; they believe in themselves and that they can achieve anything... their professional practice evolves and they consider further study even attain a MA/ PhD...!	
Answered above re: professional practice. Those who really 'fly' take on the responsibility for their own scholarship and create a support network for themselves to ensure maximum engagement with learning opportunities.	
The crucial word here is 'important' - not crucial or imperative. These aspects may be developed/demonstrated by the most dedicated students.	
Thomas Kuhn	
Research is not possible without criticality	
Scholarship implies deep understanding so is likely to involve learner autonomy. Ditto for research. Autonomy in Professional practice varies in context, but should always have room for autonomous action if it is really "professional "	
Life isn't about doing specific activities- its about thinking beyond the task. Autonomy is necessary, but not sufficient, for critical thought	
No-one not autonomous ever published a paper!!!	
See above. Unfortunately, in the early 21st century, teachers are not really required to develop autonomy as compliance is the name of the game, so the third element of your proposition is contentious	
Students need to develop independence as part of their professional practice. A programme cannot prepare students for every eventuality and therefore developing capability -	

what to do when you don't know what to do - is a key element of professional learning.	
Yes I believe autonomy is essential to the research process and scholarship - this does not exclude collaborative investigation	
In as much as it facilitates ambition drive and the willingness to move on to succeed. It relates to confidence	
Without autonomy, based on acquired skills and knowledge, none of the above can happen.	

Appendix 17 Learner Autonomy is important for rigour and stretch

	Agree	**Disagree**
1	Being able to accept critique and challenge without taking it personally	I am not sure what full student potential means, but I think I get the general idea. Before I can answer the question effectively, however, I would need a clearer definition of 'full student potential'....
2	I think that in order to fulfil students' full potential, they do need full opportunities to develop independence, skills, knowledge and understanding, and learner autonomy promotes this.	
3	Students attend University to develop a wide range of skills knowledge and understanding beyond just academic work	
4	Decision making within the assignment briefs and developing a unique assignment is much more challenging than writing something formulaic. Each student of mine is engaging within a specific professional context which is in itself challenging so the assignments draw out the issues for reflection and investigation within the current policy context in order to meet level 7 / 8 requirements fully.	
5	Because the lecturer is just there to guide the learning and to help develop good strategies, it is then up to the learner to progress	
6	Every student should expect these aspects in developing their skills as a learner.	
7	Full potential and independence, by any definition, cannot be attained by rote learning or uniformity of approach.	
8	"Deep learning" requires independence	
9	You can't stretch someone outside their comfort zone unless they are willing to do work. No pain, no gain. Just like any exercise, the brain has to do work in order to grow and expand.	
10	Teachers/ tutors should show students how to function without them	
11	I am looking for my students to go in directions that possibly I had not thought of, and in this way they can contribute to the development of new knowledge.	
12	Autonomous students will pursue their own interests and so stretch themselves to develop themselves rather than simply completing the tasks set.	
13	Basic groundwork first upon which the more rigorous approaches to develop independence, skills, knowledge and understanding can be built	
14	Learning for me is about critical thinking	

15	It is the difference between repeating what a tutor has said to being able to confidently challenge the dominant discourse, to being able to construct new understanding... without autonomy you have no rigour because without independent thought you are really just cloning others people's understandings -	
16	Autonomy is the ability to encapsulate all of the above qualities to independently achieve an established end (e.g., Essay or conversation or work based task)	
17	Undergraduates. Graduates need to plan their own future. Much of this can depend on leading themselves tom areas of investigative learning rather than being 'told' where to go and what to do.	

Appendix 18 Learner autonomy and student action on tutor feedback

Agree	Disagree
As mentioned previously, the development of autonomy in learning does not preclude the need for regular liaison/interaction with a tutor/expert.	I've only ticked 'no' as there is a requirement to tick. I don't understand the statement
Knowing how to ask for clarification if the student does not understand what to do in response to the tutor feedback	"student action" of this kind assumes non-autonomy and undermines it
Students need to be able to independently action feedback from assignments, which learner autonomy facilitates them to be able to do.	
Students need to take ownership of their own learning in order to make progress	
If feedback has been given then one would hope that learners can address the comments to move their learning forward - they might need some help with this which is fine,	
It shows engagement of the learner	
The wording of this section might be a little confusing. Although I agree that these actions are indicative of autonomous learning, they may not always be obvious to a tutor - except in open tutorial/dialogue/discussion - rather than assuming they will be noted in the next assignment submitted.	
The tutors can't do the work of learning for a student. They have to do their own work. We can guide, support, encourage, but they have to want to change.	
Feedback guides students and helps them feel safe	
Students need to learn how to respond to feedback in order to improve in future.	
Students should not simply respond to tutor feedback but consider it and apply it in order to develop their own practice. Tutor feedback should be a stimulus and not a requirement.	
Feedback is powerful IF carefully constructed, and objectively received and reflected on in order to provide for support for students' development, progress and attainment	
Feedback should stimulate and provide a platform for autonomy	
Autonomy relates to taking on feedback proactively and integrating it into your next piece of work	
If the tutor is being supportive and can highlight areas that will lead to improvement then it is essential that the student will - through their own volition - act on this, or have a robust argument as to why the tutor's view is wrong!	

Appendix 19 Independent research skills using physical and digital resources

Agree	**Disagree**
Autonomy is gained over time; can a learner be totally autonomous? Taken too far, this leads to the possibility of an automaton rather than a living person? BUT through liaison with an expert tutor, sufficient autonomy can be developed to the extent that the above skills can be applied effectively.	I'm not sure what you mean by independent research skills
This is vital because it is the basis for formulating and planning a strategy and a framework for independent working	
I think in terms of the importance of learner autonomy, it is particularly necessary for conducting research.	
Students need these to achieve their full potential	
Again - anything formulaic is unlikely to fit with unique social contexts within which part time PG students work so it is important to be able to make independent (but guided) decisions at design stage and in progress.	
Because it helps develop the student	
Once students have been taught what the resources are and how they might be accessed/used etc it is important that they continue to develop and apply these themselves.	
Eventually; it is one of the desired outcomes of a long process.	
Almost a tautology - independent research skills are necessarily autonomous surely?	
The key with research is finding the question- and learner autonomy defines what is worth asking.	
We all learn in different ways and have different circumstances	
With the wealth of resources currently available no tutor can be an expert in every area. The student needs to be able to select and apply relevant research in order to further the field of knowledge.	
Absolutely imperative, otherwise why bother to do research that one does not know how to engage with or get on with	
The more tools a student has to hand the greater the independence in learning	
This is very important to me. Autonomy must involve an element of being able to independently master and effectively use the key resources needed to get on with work independently	
At levels 6 and 7 they are not going to be 'spoon fed' (in theory. There will be those tutors who see the mantra of the 'student experience' as an excuse to provide all for their students).	

Appendix 20. Uncategorised tutor strategies for engaging learner autonomy

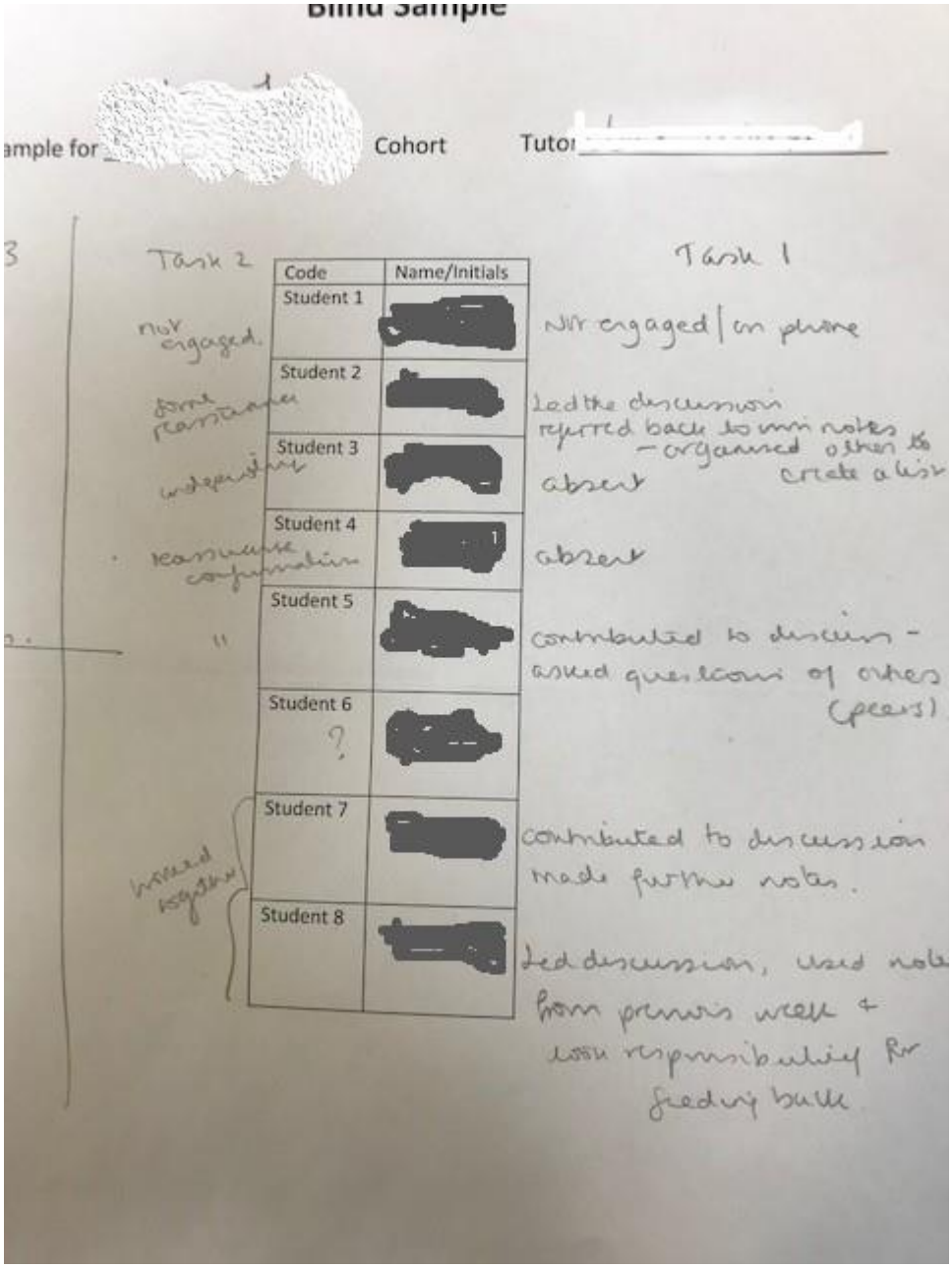
Uncategorised Strategy	Possible new ALC Subcomponent
Supporting the students in deciding a focus point for discussion	Providing support structure
Ensuring range of opportunities for guidance and support, including university support services	Providing support structure
Guided learning / giving students ideas	Providing support structure
Discussion of assignment	Providing support structure
Giving a list of "Frequently Asked Questions" for the assignment	Providing support structure
Individualised support in tutorials	Providing support structure
Scaffolding strategies in sessions	
Study skills advice	Providing support structure
Showing students how to find their own research and how to make notes on research papers	Providing support structure
Encouraging wider publication of PG research	Providing support structure
Encouraged students to take responsibility for their own actions.	Providing challenges
Having high expectations	Providing challenges
Clearly stating my expectations of them as learners	Providing challenges
We do not provide comprehensive reading lists	Providing challenges

Appendix 21 Tutor 1 assessments of degrees of autonomy on two tasks using the ALC

Critical analysis				
	A	AD	H	HI
Student A				X
Student B			x	
Student C			x	
Student D	x			
Student E		x		
Student F			x	
Student G			x	
Student H			x	

Thinking				
	A	AD	H	HI
Student A			x	
Student B			x	
Student C				X
Student D		x		
Student E			x	
Student F			x	
Student G			x	
Student H			x	

Appendix 22: Feedback from Tutor 6



Appendix 23. Comparison of Tutor 6 observations with the observation criteria for degrees of autonomy.

Observation Criteria	**Tutor 6 observation**
(A)-Autonomous a) Initiates action b) Student participates verbally answering and asking pertinent questions relating to knowledge for all c) Engages actively in group tasks d) Completes post session tasks e) Brings information deemed relevant into the session f) Avoids distraction g) Tends to lead h) Listens actively	Led discussion took notes from previous week and took responsibility for feeding back. Contributed to discussion made further notes Led discussion referred back to own notes, organised others to create a list. Independence Worked together
(AD)- Autonomous Dependent a) Responds to action b) Student participates verbally answering and asking pertinent questions relating to knowledge for all c) Engages responsively in group tasks d) Completes post session tasks e) Avoids distraction f) May lead, may also follow g) Listens actively	Worked together Independence Contributed to discussion asked questions of others
H – Heteronomous a) May respond to action b) Does not participate verbally unless directly requested, gives minimal response c) Tends to leave action to others during group tasks, may listen, rarely contributes d) Tends not to complete post session tasks e) May be distracted by own thoughts, electronic gadgets f) Tends to follow	Not engaged, on phone Worked together

Listens passively (may appear disinterested though listening)	
HI- Heteronomous Independent a) Responds to action b) Student participates verbally asking questions about own progress rather than knowledge for all c) Engages responsively in group tasks d) Completes post session tasks e) Avoids distraction f) Tends to follow g) Listens actively most of the time	Some reassurance Reassurance Confirmation Worked together Independence

Appendices 9593 words